

Horizon

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Vol. VIII No. 48 December 1943

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REPRODUCTION of a painting by RENÉ MAGRITTE
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COMMENT

CHRISTMAS is here again with its unseasonable associations with peace and good will. It is time to vote for the HORIZON prizes. All subscribers have a vote, for they alone can give proof that they have received all twelve numbers. Anything in HORIZON for 1943 is eligible for a prize—poem, painting, review, letter, story, essay, reportage.

The first prize is Thirty pounds, the second prize is Twenty pounds. Any subscriber who wishes to add more to the prize-money is cordially invited to do so, and any reader or subscriber who wishes to bestow a personal gift on any contributor to HORIZON is also warmly invited to follow his inclination.

HOW TO VOTE

Will all subscribers who have received HORIZON through 1943 send us a postcard (not a letter) addressed to HORIZON, 2 Lansdowne Terrace, and write on it 'HORIZON prizes (1) . . . (2) . . ., with their signature, and the name and address of the bookseller or newsagent through whom they subscribe. All recommendations for a first prize score two points; for second prize one. The two highest totals win the prizes. HORIZON welcomes additional suggestions and criticism when space permits.

Example: 'I recommend John Weever for first prize for his poem "Pattern for a Psychometry", and for the second prize "Can't a bloke laugh", a story by John Weever. I would like to see more articles on younger poets in HORIZON, yours Dorothy Weever, subscriber through Boots, Bootle'.

As it is hoped that our subscribers will be forming themselves from now on into a body which annually awards these prizes, we invite them to take their responsibility seriously, not to forget the little-known name which appears only once in the dazzle of the famous who contribute regularly, to choose what they think 'the best' in the general meaning of the term, and not to hesitate to increase the prize money or award their own consolation prizes if they can afford to do so. The results will appear in March to give overseas subscribers a chance to be heard.

There have been many good books which HORIZON has not had space to review—several by HORIZON authors. Here is our choice for Christmas presents—if you can find them.

Best books of criticism: *Channel Packet* by Raymond Mortimer

(Hogarth Press) and *The Heritage of Symbolism* by C. M. Bowra (Macmillan); best book of poems: *World over All* by C. Day Lewis (Cape); also recommended: K. J. Raine's *Stone and Flower* (Nicholson & Watson); Anne Ridler's *The Nine Bright Shiners* and Lawrence Durrell's *Poems* (both Faber); Geoffrey Grigson's *Under the Cliff* (Routledge) and Osbert Sitwell's *Selected Poems* (Duckworth); Cecil Beaton's *Near East*, and James Pope-Hennessy's *West Indian Summer* (Batsford) are the two liveliest books of travel. Two recent novels by HORIZON authors are Koestler's *Arrival and Departure* (Cape), and Toynbee's *The Barricades* (Putnam). HORIZON wishes a merry Christmas to all readers and contributors and especially to those in the Forces at home and abroad, and to *Fontaine*, its continental colleague (copies of which we are now able to supply), to *La France Libre*, which has just had its fourth birthday, and to *Partisan Review* and all the other little magazines.

Readers of HORIZON will remember John, who thought of going to New Zealand after the war. He has now received information about Argeptina and hopes soon to have reports on Brazil and U.S.A.

LAURIE LEE

EQUINOX

Now tilts the sun his monument,
now sags his raw unwritten stone
deep in October's diamond clay.

And oozy sloes like flies are hung
malignant on the shrivelled stem,
too late to ripen, or to grow.

Now is the time the wasp forsakes
the rose born like a weakly child
of earth-bed's pallor, death-bed's flush.

Time when the gourd upon the ground
cracks open kernel or decay
indifferent to man or worm.

Time of no violence, when at last
the shocked eye clears the battlefield
and burns down black the roots of grass,

And finds the prize of all its pain,
bedded in smoke, on leaves of blood—
love's charcoal cross, unlost, unwon.

NORMAN NICHOLSON
THE COUNCIL OF
THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS

Across the shingle to the land
The winds from the sea blow the sand
And little dunes like mole-hills rear
Day by day in the town square.
The council men with spade and shovel
Try to make the roadway level,
But the winds whirl and the bents bind
And the rain cakes the stalking sand.
Gutters are blocked with yellow weed,
The sand is puddled into mud;
Restharrow, stonecrop and sweet gale
Clog the ruts of lorry wheel;
Nettles prick up dusty lugs,
And thistles thrust through broken flags,
And where the rusty ragworts grow.
The slow sand drifts like dry brown snow.
It blows through window and through door,
Along the lobby, up the stair,
Drops like sugar in the tea,
Like pepper in the cooking stew,
Till every child of the town owns
Sand in his blood, sand in his bones.

Inside the school where sea winds rumble
The parish councillors assemble.
The Chairman at the teacher's table
Rubs his jaw like a smooth cobble.
His chin is granite, eyes are flint
That on his trusted colleagues glint.

Here sits the oldest councillor;
His cheeks are red as iron ore,
Around his teeth the plump lips roll
Bent in an avaricious smile.
He is the one who always knows
Where a building contract goes,
And where the County Council grants
Will give a chance to raise the rents.
He'd melt the sand if it would yield
Half a pennyweight of gold;

HORIZON

He'd boil the sea if it would leave
Silver in its weedy sieve;
He'd hack the living limbs of earth
If bony rocks had any worth,
And wring the guts of the red ore
If they would give one blood-drop more.

The second councillor is there,
Sitting upright in his chair.
His face is lean and whippet-jawed
And blue as slate with three-day beard;
His eyes from out their sockets bore
Like corkscrews at the stubborn air;
His lips, like whetstones in his cheeks
Sharpen the words that his tongue speaks.
He will hate his worthy hire
If someone gets a penny more;
He will scorn the job he does
If someone works a minute less.
He bites the smile off his own face
Envious of other's happiness,
And shuts his eyes on heaven's blue
Because it blesses bishops too.

The farmer's member from the dale
Always returned without a poll,
Slovenly sprawls in his squat seat,
Third of this company of state.
His slothful eyes are dull as smoke,
His trilby pushed back to his neck,
His ribs are flabby and his stomach
Hangs from his waist like a full hammock.
He gives no thought of future peril
If earth's rich womb be laboured sterile,
Nor cares the price of a dead wick
What happens to the men he'll sack,
Content the country's sound in limb
So long as nothing troubles him.

The fourth good governor has eyes
Purple with blood and dull with booze.
Red as ripe strawberries, his lip
Slobbers with juice like dripping tap.
Down his throat he'd quickly swill
The bitter sea if it were ale,
And, gluttonous as fire, he'd eat
The sand if it were sausage meat,
And stuff Scawfell inside his belly
If it were lamb and currant jelly.

Bright as a rose-hip in September
 Lolls the only woman member;
 Light and lecherous, her eye
 Signals the Chairman jauntily—
 A heavy scent, like foetid flower
 Rotting in the hothouse air,
 Puffs from her curls, crinkled as crêpe,
 When she shakes her lacquered nape.
 For hers is love that bears no fruit,
 Barren at its acid root;
 Hers is the slang of lechery,
 The mean excursions of the eye,
 Cheapjack commerce of breast and thigh
 On sandhill or in passage-way.
 The quickened sap of budding seed
 Will never flow along her blood;
 Marriage and motherhood she'll miss
 For sake of one more drunken kiss.

The sixth man stalks about the room,
 His red hair angry as a flame,
 His eyes like white-hot poker-ends,
 Swollen his veins like gouty hands.
 He'll fight the Council for his plan
 To throttle Hitler, bomb Berlin,
 Teach foreigners some English fashions
 By cleaning up the French and Russians,
 And turn around again and show
 A lesson to the U.S.A.
 It's heaven to him in any weathers
 If he can make it hell for others,
 Satisfied only when all action
 Explodes in wild dissatisfaction.

Silent as slate the Chairman sits,
 Waiting till the talk abates,
 Proud his eyes as polished ore;
 His mouth incised with a stiff sneer,
 Knowing he need do nought to check it
 Because the Council's in his pocket,
 And any vote that he may cast
 Will be unanimously passed.

The sand against the window-sill
 Blows like a drizzle of fine hail;
 Beyond the sea, like a mad dog,
 The wind worries the vermin fog.

DR. JAKOBI

AN INTERVIEW WITH C. G. JUNG

DEPTH PSYCHOLOGY AND SELF-KNOWLEDGE

Does depth psychology signify a new way to self-knowledge?

Yes, depth psychology must be termed a new way, for in all the methods practised up to now the existence of the unconscious was not taken into consideration. With it a new factor came into our field of view, which has seriously complicated and fundamentally altered the situation. Formerly, the fact had not been reckoned with that man is a 'twofold' being—a being with a conscious side which he knows, and with an unconscious side, of which he knows nothing but which need be no secret to his fellows. How often one makes all sorts of mistakes without being conscious of them in the least, while they are borne in upon others all the more painfully! Man lives as a creature whose one hand doesn't know what the other is doing. The recognition that we have to allow for the existence of an unconscious is a fact of revolutionary importance. Conscience as an ethical instance extends only as far as consciousness itself. Where one lacks knowledge, though, one can do the most astonishing or terrible things without calling oneself to account and without ever suspecting what one is doing. Unconscious actions are always taken as a matter of course and are therefore not critically evaluated. One is then surprised at the incomprehensible reactions of one's neighbours, on whom one places the responsibility, i.e. one fails to see what one does oneself and seeks in others the ground for all the consequences that follow one's actions. Marriages furnish an instructive example in this respect of how easily one sees the mote in another's eye, but not the beam in one's own. Of far greater, indeed truly monstrous, proportions are the projections of war propaganda, in which a vice of civil life is exalted into a principle. The unwillingness to perceive one's own faults and their projection on to others, stands at the beginning of most quarrels

and is the strongest guarantee that injustice, spite and persecution will not easily die out. When one remains unconscious of oneself one is usually unaware of inner conflicts. One even holds the existence of unconscious conflicts to be impossible. There are many marriages in which the partners consider every possible source of conflict with anxious care, the one actually imagining himself to be immune from such things, while the other is filled up to the throat with laboriously repressed complexes and almost chokes upon them. Such a situation often has a serious effect upon the children too. We know that children often have dreams dealing with the unconfessed problems of their parents. These problems weigh upon the children because the parents, being themselves unconscious of them, have never attempted to come to grips with their own difficulties, whereby something like a poisoned atmosphere is created. For this reason the neuroses of childhood depend to a considerable degree upon the parents' conflicts.

How is depth psychology distinguished from other lines of psychological investigation hitherto practised? Where does it coalesce with other disciplines?

Psychology did not previously recognize that motivation of the contents of consciousness which is conditioned by the presence of the unconscious. Through taking into account the unconscious, everything suddenly gets a double bottom, as it were. We have to look at everything from two sides, whereas the old psychology was satisfied with the contents of consciousness. Thus the old method of explaining the occurrence of psychogenic (mentally occasioned) symptoms could content itself with the supposition that such symptoms were autosuggested figments of imagination. The modern explanation, which also lets the unconscious mind of the patient have its word, investigates his dreams, fantasies, and complexes, i.e. that segment of the individual's life history which is responsible for the appearance of the symptoms. No one questions today that neurotic symptoms are produced by processes in the unconscious. The becoming or making conscious of the causative contents of the unconscious has therefore a certain therapeutic significance. Psychogenic symptoms are products brought forth by the unconscious. To the symptoms belong certain opinions and convictions that are

uttered consciously enough, it is true, but nevertheless are based in reality upon determining unconscious motives. So it comes about that a too importunate and one-sided assertion of principles can often be traced back to an unconscious failure to live up to them. I knew someone, for instance, who, on every occasion, suitable or not, paraded his principle of honesty and truthfulness before the public. As I soon discovered, he suffered from a rather too lively imagination, which now and then seduced him into gross lies. The subject of truth therefore occasioned in him a not at all misplaced 'sentiment d'incomplétude', which in turn stimulated him to exceptionally loud ethical proclamations, no small part of whose aim was to beget in himself a conviction of honesty. With the recognition that every conscious process rests in part upon an unconscious one and may represent the latter symbolically, former views of psychic causality are radically called into question. Direct causal sequences in consciousness appear doubtful, and every experience of mental content urgently requires to be supplemented by the unconscious aspect pertaining to it. Although depth psychology is a discipline in itself, it lurks invisibly, as far as the fact of the unconscious is concerned, in the background of all other disciplines. Just as the discovery of radioactivity overthrew the old physics and made necessary a revision of many scientific concepts, so do all the disciplines concerned with the mental in a narrower or wider sense undergo in part a broadening out, in part a revision at the hands of depth psychology. Through it, new philosophical problems are raised, and it signifies an enrichment for pedagogy and still more for characterology; in criminology new problems also come into being, especially as regards criminal motives; for medicine it opens up an unsuspected store of fresh insights and possibilities through the discovery of the interdependence between bodily and mental processes and through the inclusion of the factor of neurosis; through it too less closely related sciences such as mythology, ethnology, etc. are richly fructified.

Are the various schools of depth psychology similar in their tendencies?

The principal schools of depth psychology up to date are based respectively upon various aspects of the unconscious. The unconscious possesses a biological, a physiological, a mythical,

a religious aspect, etc. This implies that the most varied conceptions are not only possible but even necessary. Each has its own justification, though none to the exclusion of others, for the unconscious is a highly complex phenomenon, to which one single concept can never do justice. One cannot judge a person from a moral standpoint only for example; one must regard him, though, from this standpoint *too*! Certain contents of the unconscious can be understood as strivings for power, others again as the expressions of the sexual or other drives, while yet others allow no explanation on the ground of biological drives under any circumstances.

Has 'analytical psychology', i.e. the Jungian school of depth psychology, definite guiding principles?

I should prefer not to use the term 'guiding principles' in this connection. Just because of the extreme variety and complexity of the aspects and possible significances of the unconscious, every 'guiding principle' works as an arbitrary presumption, prejudicing one in advance, which would anticipate its indeterminate, irrational forms of manifestation and perhaps force them into a scheme unsuited to the actual phenomena. One must avoid all presumptions so far as possible in order to grasp the pure manifestation itself. This must carry its own interpretation to such an extent that its significance is immediately evident from the nature of the phenomenon and is not forced upon the latter by the observer. He must, in fact, accustom himself to be guided more by the material than by his own opinions, however well founded they may appear to him. Every item of mental experience presents itself in an individual form, even though its deeper content may be collective in nature. One can never determine in advance, however, which of its principal aspects conceals itself behind the individual manifestation. 'Guiding principles' are therefore admissible at most as working hypotheses, and this only in the realm of scientific research. The practical material is best assembled *mente vacua* (without any preconceived theories).

What are the principal methods of analytical psychology? Does the interpretation of dreams stand in the foreground?

The analytical situation has a fourfold aspect: (a) The patient

gives me in his own words a picture of the situation as he consciously sees it. (b) His dreams give me a compensating picture of the unconscious aspect of it. (c) The situation positive in which the patient is placed through the physician's presence and participation adds an objective side to the two other subjective ones. (d) Working over the material collected under *a*, *b*, and *c* fills out the total picture of the psychological situation. The necessity of working over it comes from the fact that the total picture often stands in the liveliest contrast to the views of the ego-personality and therefore leads to all sorts of intellectual and emotional reactions and problems, which in their turn clamour for solution and answer. Since the final goal of the undertaking can only consist in restoring the integrity of the complete personality in a form capable of survival, one cannot dispense with a knowledge of the unconscious. The purest product of the unconscious we have before us in the dream. The dream points directly to the unconscious, for it 'happens' and we have not invented it. It brings us unfalsified material. What has passed through consciousness is already sifted and remodelled. As we can deduce from the lava ejected by a volcano the constitution of the layers of earth from which it comes, so we can draw deductions as to the unconscious situation from the contents of dreams. Only dream material *together* with conscious material reveals the picture of the *entire* person. In this way alone can we learn who our own antagonist is. Although the dream discloses the unconscious to us with perhaps the nearest approach to faithfulness that we can attain, yet we can come upon its traces in every form of creative activity too, such as music and poetry, and in all other forms of art. It appears more clearly in all manifestations of a spontaneous and creative kind, the further these are from everything mechanical, technical, and intellectual. As well as from dreams we can therefore draw conclusions from such things as drawings in which patients reveal their inward pictures. Although, as is apparent, the personality of the patient stands at the centre of our attention and introspection is an indispensable instrument of our work in common, yet this is anything rather than *brooding*. Brooding is a sterile activity that leads only back upon itself and never comes to a logical goal. It is not *work* but a weakness, even a vice. One can legitimately, though, when one feels oneself not to be in order, make oneself the object of serious investigation, just as

one can earnestly search one's conscience without succumbing to moral weakness. Whoever is in bad odour with himself, whoever feels himself to be in need of improvement, whoever, in brief, will become adjusted must take counsel with himself. Unless one alters oneself inwardly, outward alterations of the situation are worthless or even harmful. It is not enough to make a start and cry: 'I take the responsibility!' Not only mankind but fate also in such a case would like to know *who* promises to take this weighty step and whether it is someone who *can* take the responsibility. We all know that anyone can *say* so. The work does not make the man, but the man the work. Self-searching, even with outside help, is therefore—or rather should be—the indispensable condition for taking over higher responsibility, were it only that of realizing the meaning of individual life in the best possible form and to the fullest possible degree, as nature always does, albeit *without responsibility*, the latter being the fatefully and divinely allotted office of man.

Is not an important milestone in the development of self-knowledge, which has increased the difficulties of the 'way to oneself', to be found in the Reformation and in the loss of the confession for Protestants, i.e. for many million persons? Has not self-searching become keener and deeper through the omission of the dialogue that the Catholic has with his confessor and through the omission of the absolution?

The difficulties have indeed become enormously greater, as evidenced by the increased prevalence of complexes among Protestants, which has been statistically established. But these increased difficulties constitute—if the Protestant will really face and grapple with them—an exceptionally advantageous basis for self-knowledge. They can however just as easily lead, if the individual fails, either to sterile brooding or to easy superficiality. Most people require outside help, because the basis of experience is otherwise not real enough; without it they do not 'see' themselves, cannot differentiate themselves from something other than themselves, and thus have no check. Everything flows together inside and is answered only by oneself, not by someone else, someone different. It makes an infinite difference whether I confess my guilt only to myself or to another person. This preoccupation with oneself often leads with Protestants to spiritual arrogance and to isolation in their own ego. Although

analytical psychology guards strictly against being looked upon as a substitute for confession, yet in practice it must often function *nolens volens* as such. There are so many Catholics who no longer go to confession, and still more Protestants who do not even know what confession is, that it is not surprising some of the many yield to their need of communication and share their burdens with a physician in a way which could almost be called confession. The difference is, however, considerable, inasmuch as the physician is no priest, no theological and moral authority, but, at best, a sympathetically listening confidant with some experience of life and knowledge of mankind. Psychology is admittedly only an expedient, but in the present day a necessary one. Were it not a necessity, it would have collapsed long since from inner emptiness. It meets, however, an unquestionably existing need.

Does knowledge of the 'other side', i.e. of one's own unconscious side, bring relief, release? Does not self-knowledge rather increase the tension between what one is and would like to be?

Being able to talk things over freely can constitute in itself a great relief. In general, working with the unconscious brings an increase of tension, because it activates the opposites in the mind through making them conscious. This is altogether dependent, though, upon the situation from which one starts. The too optimistic, carefree individual falls into depression on account of the situation newly brought to consciousness in him. On the contrary, the pressure on the inwardly-brooding person is released. This initial situation decides whether a release or increase of pressure will follow. Through self-searching in analysis people suddenly become aware of their real limitations. How often a woman has previously felt herself as a snow-white dove and had no suspicion of the devil concealed within her! Without this knowledge she can neither be healed nor attain wholeness. For one individual deeper knowledge of himself therefore means a punishment, for another a release. In general, every act of becoming conscious means a tensing of opposites. It is in order to avoid this tension that one represses one's conflicts. If one becomes conscious of them, then one is drawn into the corresponding tension. This forms in turn the decisive motive for the solution of the problems raised.

Does not the systematic occupation with oneself lead to egocentricity?

At the first glance, from an external and superficial point of view, it does make one egocentric. However, I consider this justifiable up to a point. One *must* occupy oneself with oneself; otherwise one does not become complete, otherwise one can never develop! One must plant a garden and give attention to its care if one wants vegetables; otherwise only weeds grow. 'Ego-centric' has the evil connotation of pathological egoism. As I previously showed, occupation with and meditation upon one's own being is an absolutely legitimate, even necessary activity if one strives after a real alteration and improvement of the situation. Outwardly changing the situation, doing something else, forgetting what one was, alters nothing essentially. Indeed, even when a bad man does good, he is not therefore good, but he suffers from a good symptom without being altered in character. How many drinkers, for example, have turned abstinent without being freed from their mental alcoholism! And only too soon they succumbed again to their vice. There are essentially bad natures that actually specialize in being good and, if they chance to become some kind of educator, work catastrophically. The *systematic* occupation with oneself serves a purpose. It is work and means performance. Often, in fact, it is much better to educate oneself first before one educates others. It is by no means certain that the man with good intentions is under all circumstances a good man. If he is not, then his best intentions will lead to ruin, as daily experience proves.

Does not an exact knowledge of one's own being, with all its contradictions and absurdities, make one unsure? Does it not weaken self-confidence and therefore decrease ability to survive in the battle of existence?

Much too often people have a pathetic cock-sureness, which then leads them into nothing but foolishness. It is better to be uncertain because one thereby becomes more humble and more modest. It is true that the inferiority complex always carries in itself the danger of surmounting itself and compensating the supposed lack by a flight into the contrary. Wherever an inferiority complex exists, it has its own good reason; there is always inferiority, although not precisely where one thinks it is. Modesty

and humility signify no inferiority complex. They are valuable, indeed admirable virtues and not complexes. They prove that their fortunate possessor is no arrogant fool, but knows his own limitations and will therefore never, blind, presumptuous, and drunken on his own imagined greatness, stumble beyond the bounds of humanity. Those persons are truly unsure who imagine themselves sure. Our life is unsure, and therefore a feeling of unsureness corresponds far better to the reality than bluff and the illusion of certainty. In the long run the better adjusted individual triumphs, not the wrongly self-confident, who is surrounded by danger without and within. Measure not by money or power! Peace of soul means more.

Can depth psychology further social adjustment and increase the capacity of men to find contact with others?

Through the deepened self-knowledge to which depth psychology compels people it creates great possibilities for discussion: one can interpret oneself in the analytical dialogue and learn through self-knowledge to understand others. Thereby one becomes more just and more tolerant. One can above all take one's own mistakes into account, and this is probably the best means of making a proper adjustment to one's environment. One can also naturally, as of all that one knows, make bad use of one's knowledge of oneself.

Has self-knowledge a healing, freeing effect?

Remorse, confession and purification from sin have always been the conditions of salvation. In so far as analysis furthers confession, it can also be said to bring about a kind of renewal. Ever and again we hear that patients dream of the analysis as of a refreshing and purifying bath, or their dreams and visions bring symbols of rebirth which show unmistakably that the knowledge of their unconscious mind and of its meaningful rôle in their mental life provides them with fresh strength, appears to them indeed as a release from unavoidable disaster or from fast entanglement in the skeins of fate.

How does the integration of the unconscious express itself in the concrete mental situation?

This question can be answered only in a general way. Individuality is so varied that in each single case the integration of the

unconscious takes place in a different and unforeseen way. One could describe this with the help of concrete examples. The human personality is in itself incomplete so long as we take simply the ego, the conscious, into consideration. It becomes complete only when supplemented by the unconscious. Therefore knowledge of the unconscious is indispensable for every true self-investigation. Through its inclusion, the centre of personality is displaced from the limited ego to the more comprehensive self, the latter constituting that mediating factor which includes both realms, the conscious and the unconscious, within itself and unites them with each other. This self is the centre about which the true personality is oriented. Its comprehension, therefore, has been since remotest times the goal of every method of development based upon the principle of self-knowledge as, for example, Indian yoga, proves. From the Indian standpoint our psychology therefore appears as a 'dialectical' yoga. I must remark, however, that yoga has quite definite notions as to the goal that is to be reached and does everything to attain this postulated goal. With us, though, intellectualism, rationalism, and vitalism are such dangerous mental forces that psychotherapy must whenever possible avoid setting itself such goals. Should this aim of attaining wholeness and realizing his originally intended personality grow naturally in the patient, we may sympathetically assist him toward it. If it does not grow of itself, it cannot be implanted without remaining a foreign body. Therefore we renounce such measures where nature itself is not clearly working to this end. As a medical art, provided with only human means and capabilities, our psychotherapy does not presume to preach salvation or a way thereto, for that does not lie in our hands.

Zürich: July 1943

HUGO MANNING

ADIÓS, ARGENTINA!

DEAR John: I really can't write in a stiff, formal way just now. There is no time, and these words about Argentina will have to be written at one sitting. Also, you yourself said, 'Write the article on Argentina just as if you were talking to me.' So here goes. It will be an insufficient article, of course, and full of my own predilections. I sometimes see the meaning that is attached to *objectivity* as nothing more than a high-class version of *dishonesty*. So much rationalization and twisting. Angels might be objective; I wouldn't know, because I've never met an angel. But I know that human beings cannot be objective. Argentina. What does that word mean to me? Does it mean the brilliant, unsleeping streets of Buenos Aires, the Palermo Park, the hypnotic cabarets in the streets of Corrientes, Maipú, etc., the much over-rated waterfront colour of the Boca where Eugene O'Neill was supposed to have sown his wild oats, the beautiful and hilly province of Córdoba, or the wine-producing province of Mendoza? When I left Argentina some time in 1942 I was sad in a sense. I had received a good deal of kindness from the people there. But I had the feeling that I had left, a much less poor person in spirit. I don't know why. It was *Adiós, Argentina!* and I was sorry and glad at the same time. No one can really know a country. No one can really know Argentina, that precocious child of the New World. It is amazingly backward and progressive at the same time. It gives the impression of being feudal, narrow-minded and prudish. It also gives the impression of being astonishingly impressionable, receptive and go-ahead. A country of extremes. Like the climates that you will find within her frontiers. It has an area of much more than a million square miles. Extremes. The province of Jujuy with its Indians, Humahuaca desert and tropical vegetation. Tierra del Fuego in the south with its bleakness and bitterly cold winds. Mar del Plata, a sophisticated seaside resort, no less busy and attractive than Blackpool or Brighton. The magnificent falls and cataracts of Iguazu leaping out of the stern Misiones scenery. Argentina is almost a third the size of Europe. Its population is approximately thirteen

millions. It is an amazingly rich country. And its policy in recent years has been to keep its doors closed to foreigners, especially refugees. I've never met such precocious people as the Argentines. I've also never met such pig-headed people. They are always seemingly polite. (An old Spanish custom.) They never say 'No!' They say 'Yes!' and act 'No!' if it suits their purpose. The Argentine living in the provinces is much more addicted to this form of social insincerity. The denizen of Buenos Aires (commonly known as a *porteño*) is a little more forthright. Buenos Aires is a remarkably cosmopolitan city. It is a remarkably modern city, more modern than New York in my opinion. Its newness shocks one, and the few colonial buildings scattered here and there do not compensate for this. How can a country with such extremes be a negative country? You must hate it and love it at the same time. I remember the young Scotsman, already near the grave, who exhorted me to leave Buenos Aires. 'It is a treacherous city, a cesspool,' he said. 'It will get you as it got me.' I did not stay too long in Buenos Aires, not because of the exhortation but because I couldn't get on with the humid heat there which was making me nervy. So I went to live and work in the capital of Córdoba. The city of Córdoba: beautiful, really, with a university founded in 1613, splendid colonial buildings, the Sarmiento Park, the delightful natural zoo, the old twisting streets, etc. A Spanish journalist working for a national newspaper in Buenos Aires told me that Córdoba was like a typical Spanish provincial city. If Buenos Aires is treacherous, then Córdoba is also treacherous, in a different way. If Córdoba is like a typical Spanish provincial city, then it is easy to understand why Spain had one of the greatest civil wars in history. I am not indulging in any writing on the wall, but I would be a fool not to believe that Argentina is paving the way for serious internal trouble. It is not uncommon for some Europeans, particularly English people, to deride a new country, although at bottom they may admire it immensely. I stayed in Buenos Aires long enough to manage to put in a year or so's work on *The Buenos Aires Herald* and *Times of Argentina*. That afforded me the opportunity of coming in contact with members of the English-speaking community and learning about the make-up of the average British official in Argentina. It is as appalling as appalling can be from the point of view of good relations with Argentina, from the point of view of spreading

the gospel of British traditions, etc. (Luckily the British Council has done something in recent times in the way of spreading the gospel of British cultural traditions. It has been very helpful.) I will be more explicit on this point: there is a tendency, among British people, to deride and look down on Argentina and the Argentines, a tendency to be blind to the Latin character, a tendency towards an isolation that has done much to hurl certain Argentines into the arms of the much more subtle Axis adventurers in the Latin-American playground. Many of these people, after spending quite a time deriding Latin America and, in their obnoxious isolation, try to return to the Old World, to the suburban English villa or their boyhood homes, and fail miserably. They come back almost with the regularity of migrant birds. They come back because they are shocked into the realization that they are relative nobodies in the country of their birth and somebodies of really baroque importance in the narrow English-speaking social world they inhabit in a foreign country. So they come back, preferring the suburbs of Buenos Aires like Tigre and Hurlingham or the amenities of the sierras of Córdoba to the best that London, Surrey or Scotland can offer. I suppose the more mediocre type of Englishman has so far been sent out to Argentina; the interesting and sentient type only goes there of his own free will (without a contract in his pocket) by accident. There is also the broken-down and useless type, the habitual drunkard or spendthrift or bad lad who has been involved in some scandal, who is literally dumped on Argentina by exasperated relatives or friends. I have seen that type. They reminded me of the portrayal by Charles Laughton in a film about a beachcomber. They were equally as funny. They are the remittance-men, the ne'er-do-wells, drinking themselves to oblivion in the low-down cafés and restaurants. It was unfair to Argentina to dump these men there. But then I recollect that Argentina has a bad name. It has the reputation of being one of the great centres of prostitution. But despite the existence of a street like Leandro Alem with its fifth-rate cabarets and pornographic books staring from the windows of the shops in the arcades, I doubt whether you will find a more prudish country than Argentina. However, a prudish country is always a dangerous country where love and sex tangles are driven underground and live the life of a cancer beneath the exterior of propriety. But this white-slave business,

dope-taking, homosexuality and the rest of known human vices, is to a great extent mythical in Argentina. It does exist as it does everywhere in this indivisible world, but not to the extent that popular myth would have us believe. (London during war-time, the blackout and all that, is a much more glaring example of amorality, if you can call it that, than any of the red-light centres of Buenos Aires.) Brothels have been cleaned up in Argentina. Instead of the brothel zones like San Fernando, where erotic pleasures could be bought under government supervision, you now have the *amuebladas*, furnished rooms in guest houses where men and women may meet and no questions asked and the devil-take-the hindmost. It is a social crime for a man to speak to a woman he does not know in the streets. Propriety and sordidness mixed up. A rich Argentine, respectably married, nay! even happily married, will not be exactly ashamed to admit to his friends that he has a mistress or mistresses; in fact, he might be considered a bit of a dope by some of his friends if he has no mistresses at all! It is mainly a question of money, and the attitude to women is feudal rather than progressive. Men go about and sit together in cafes in groups, often 'undisturbed' by the company of women whose place, after all, is at home, whether it be to look after the children or to titivate themselves in front of the *boudoir* mirror. It seems to me that the average Argentine is a strict guardian of his own sexual and social freedom and his wife's sexual and social bondage. That is entirely up to them and they are perfectly free to adopt this attitude, but they should not complain if their wives are often as not forced to be disloyal on the grounds of the forbidden thing being very tempting indeed. But women in Argentina have great compensations for any lack of social freedom enforced on them by certain taboos, especially if they are rich. They can live in a day-dream, imagining they are great ladies out of French romantic novels, or indulge in the gossip of women akin to the chatter in oriental harems. Indeed this *does* happen. Shall I tell you what seems to me to be the curse, the hidden cancer, in the life of Argentina? It is the 'aristocracy' complex of a new-rich class or pretentious clique that wishes to over-compensate for a *feeling* of insufficient nobility. It is the ambition of many, many Argentines to be considered as belonging to the 'aristocracy', to be among the *elite*, to have the proper name and

family tradition, to be considered among the salt of the earth. If you examine this desire under the psychological speculum, you will come to the conclusion that this abnormal wish to be an 'aristocrat' in a country which received its independence as recently as 1810, is due to a definite *feeling* of inferiority. Perhaps the Argentine cannot reconcile himself to the fact that although his country has mainly a Spanish and Italian ethnological background, he is racially more fantastic and non-existent than the average citizen of other countries. Perhaps he does not realize as other intelligent people realize, that the problem of race itself is fantastic. However, let me say at this juncture that there are relatively few Indian and *mestizo* types in Argentina. It is not like Mexico in this respect, and the indigenous population in Argentina, if we can call it that, numbers much less than half a million. An Argentine 'aristocrat' can only hope to live in the fantasy that he is 'noble' because somewhere, some time back, his ancestors were Spanish grandees. (And this at a time when a member of the broken-down nobilities of certain European countries often finds it a handicap to move through a changing world with a worthless title as his only passport to distinction. I met a Hungarian count in Buenos Aires who was actually frightened at the thought of people knowing that he was a nobleman. 'It would be bad for my business,' he said. 'People wouldn't be so inclined to trust me.') But as often as not, the ancestors of the Argentine 'aristocrat' are not Spanish grandees at all; they may just be plain honest peasants (the true salt of the earth), or refugees from some of the crises and taboos of the Old World, or cut-throats, or adventurers, etc. That difficulty is solved by our Argentine 'aristocrat.' He, in collaboration with fellow 'aristocrats', erects a certain aura around certain family names and, like Cæsar's wife, these names are above suspicion. They are the names that fill the membership lists of the fashionable clubs. They are the names that do their best to keep their doors closed to extraneous and upstart elements without realizing the positively upstart nature of their own clique. Our would-be 'aristocrat' who feels out of things must prepare to enter the 'aristocracy', especially if he happens to be rich. There is no reason why he should not be rich in an amazingly rich country where wealth was often for the asking only a relatively short while ago. He must proceed to marry off his children, preferably

his daughters if he has any, to a family-name which has the Caesar's-wife aura. He can do this quite easily, especially if the Caesar's-wife aura belongs to a family which is more spendthrift and pretentious than rich. And such families do exist side by side with the immensely wealthy ones, since true to the easy-come-easy-go process, fortunes have been squandered with great regularity and enthusiasm in Argentina. That is why you sometimes hear of poor so-and-so who once owned magnificent Arabian steeds and an enormous *estancia* and now has to 'work' in a government office at some sinecure obtained for him through the influence of a more thrifty relation. And that makes me think of nepotism. It exists everywhere in the world. It hangs like a curse over each human endeavour because we are human and also afraid, afraid to live without making a racket out of life, afraid of losing the privileges of a caste, a clique, a cherished fixation, etc. etc. It is, of course, existent in Argentina, but for reasons more in keeping with the 'aristocrat' fixation which has done so much to retard the native genius of this New World country. In Argentina, those who select important men for important jobs have an extremely difficult task. From what I have heard, know and deduce, it seems that their greatest concern is to *keep out* those 'foreign' elements, those brilliant sons of non-hallowed family names (they may be Argentines of Turkish, Jewish, Greek, Hungarian, Bulgarian, Czech, Russian or any other racial origin) in order to preserve what they consider to be Argentine *integrity*, Argentine *purity*, and 'aristocratic' traditions. It is fear. It is the fear of a clique, an 'aristocratic' clique, the very same clique that adored Franco and considered Hitler and Mussolini so much more preferable to any 'tyranny' blowing from the White House or Downing Street. It is the obnoxious clique that still detests democracy and any form of liberalism with all its heart and soul (although it sometimes pays lip-service to these), the clique that has so much easily-earned gains to lose by the slightest change in the social world. There are exceptions, of course, but the majority of cases are identical and a testimony of Argentina's wretched rôle in the contemporary scene. And now for the problem of the influence of the United States on Argentina. Hollywood is the first word that comes to my mind, Hollywood, the law-giver of social rhythms, new modes, new customs. We often resent and hate those influences

to which we succumb most easily. We resent them sometimes in the manner of a person who is being hypnotized against his or her will. So with Hollywood and Argentina or rather the United States and Argentina. Perhaps I have little to prove this wild guess on my part. It is a wild guess in a way. But there are some things about the social life of Argentina which to me symbolize all that Hollywood stands for: the immediate and easy way to things, the accent on the superficial external life, appearance at the expense of character, the *dichéd* thought, the seemingly happy ending, although at bottom in the true intimate lives of people, the trouble is only beginning. Donald Duck, Greta Garbo, Tyrone Power, etc., are international figures with an international influence bringing with them the Hollywood gospel of the stereotyped escapism, and the abominable happy ending which is no happy ending at all. Argentina, with so much less to depend on in the way of traditions and identifications than Old World countries, falls a much easier victim to Hollywood than others. Argentina has so much to absorb and so much to desire and, so little direction, that she ends up with moral indigestion. On the credit side, there have been fine North American minds who have tried to woo Argentina through the intellect and the spirit. Waldo Frank was for a time quite a prophet in Argentina. When I saw him in Argentina in 1942 he was a bit concerned about the nerve-centres of Fascism in South America. His mission was an educative one. It was too 'educative' to some louts in Buenos Aires who expressed their resentment by beating up Waldo Frank in his apartment. Some thought at one time that the basis of Argentine spiritual identification was France and the good things that France represented. That identification does exist among the Argentine cultured class (which is quite considerable in size and influence) but is neutralized by pretentiousness and lack of sentience. The good things of the French spirit were bought by suffering and pain and time and cycles of change. It is not possible to import them as many Argentines would wish to do. Because Argentina has not yet suffered and she needs to suffer very badly. She needs to grow away from the tendency to try and absorb the best of the Old World without paying for it with maturity and experience. You have told me an Argentine acquaintance said that Argentine neutrality in the present world conflict can be interpreted as a stand against the United

States. I think that is a very poor rationalization of Argentina's selfishness and desire to have the best of two worlds. And I say this because I have a profound respect for Argentina and her future. The enemies of Argentina will comfort her and agree with her in such illusions. Argentina protests so much against the influence of the States because she knows at bottom that she is willy-nilly succumbing to it to such an alarming extent. She is succumbing to that influence more than the French influence, though she would love to be considered 'French', Old World and all that, and though many of her sons have done their best to ape all the Gallic taste and culture in the *salons* and boulevards of Paris. Whose fault is that? No one's, really. It may eventually turn out to be a good thing. I don't know. It seems to me that the States and Argentina have much in common, that they are like two poles balancing the entire New World. I hear that F.D.R. has openly denounced the Argentine Government for banning Jewish newspapers and that that ban was lifted four hours after F.D.R.'s attack was published. Anti-Semitism is very peculiar in Argentina. It is both naïve and subtle at the same time. To quite a number of Argentines—especially those in the provinces—the word Jew means a Russian Communist, an atheist; in short, all that which is obnoxious to the delicate soul of an Argentine 'aristocrat'. You will often hear a Jew referred to as a Russian, whether he be a Swiss, Austrian, French, English, German or even an Argentine Jew. In a time of surrealistic ethnological terms, Argentina takes the cake as far as descriptions of Jews are concerned; in fact, Hitler's race experts might have learned quite a good deal from the Argentine 'aristocrat's' attitude to the Semitic race. To be more expressive about the nomenclature of a Semite, some Argentines (not the majority I am happy to say) use the phrase *ruso de mierda*. *Mierda*: excrement. Some Argentines, in their desire to apologize for this current expression in describing a Semite, have told me that the existence of a growing and powerful Jewish population cannot be reconciled with a country whose established religion happens to be the Roman Catholic Church. It is a pity that such theorists have not lived through a part of the present world drama and learnt to appreciate that the world is still full of godless cities with churches, and that certain aims in the name of religion only debase that very religion. Words alone could not convince

an insensitive world that that 'great Catholic gentleman' Franco was nothing more than a common adventurer who had brought degradation on the very Church he said he was defending. I believe that the world cannot live without religions. That is why I also believe that those who profess to see their God in terms of their immediate security or privileges are in danger of becoming godless. Hilaire Belloc, whose staunchness as a Roman Catholic cannot be doubted, admitted some time ago that the conflict between Catholicism and Nazism was indeed beyond all reconciliation. Argentina has been slow to learn this. We now see the torture of the torturers in the world's theatre of war. Argentina is growing an increasingly lonely figure, despised here and there. It is a pity, for this is a great country, or rather has the possibilities of becoming a great country. To a man like W. H. Hudson, the greatness of the country was in its natural resources, its birds, the attendant mysticism of the *pampas*. I used to ask myself where the Argentina of Hudson was. I never saw it in Buenos Aires. I never really saw it in Córdoba. I believed I sensed it for the first time when I was staying on an *estancia* in Gualaguaychu, Entre Rios. The birds, the flat *pampa* land, the great silences and the *gauchos* and their horses. I think *gauchos* are gentlemen in the truest sense of the word. They are like a breath of fresh air in a country of sticky sophistication, pretension and moral indigestion. They and others like them, good people and simple people, belong to the true Argentina. Adolfo Mitre of *La Nación* once told me that Argentina lacked real men of moral courage, talent and vision. That is not quite true, because for a country with such a small population, she has quite a number of gifted people in the sciences, in art and in literature. I should say that there was more appetite for problems of the soul, mysticism, darkness, introspection, etc., in Argentina than in a country like England. Dostoevsky is still a moving force among certain Argentines who fancy themselves as having spiritual and emotional problems of a very complex nature. Rilke has been taken up in quite a big way, and there is quite a plague of poetasters who ape the pseudo-religious content of Rilke's poetry. Kafka has become fashionable. D. H. Lawrence is looked up to as being every inch a prophet. And T. E. Lawrence has recently enjoyed the attention of the Argentine cultured class, mainly through the interest taken in his life and work by that very talented woman

Victoria Ocampo. In fact, English figures have a very great friend in Ocampo; she parades them like prize possessions in the pages of her magazine *Sur*. Virginia Woolf is probably as well known in Argentine literary circles as she is in England. I have thought of a Norse proverb, 'Bare is his back who has no brother,' as symbolizing Argentina's position among the family of nations of the world. But that is not at all apt, because Argentina can never be really alone when there is always the redeeming feature of her indigenous life and of her fine and serious intellects who try to preserve all that matters during the external nuisances of this our world. I do recollect that Argentina has produced a work like *Martin Fierro*, a work which only confirms the importance and basis of the gaucho and his philosophy in Argentine life. In the end the gaucho or what he represents will triumph over the 'aristocrat', because it is the gaucho who is the true aristocrat. Argentina has great lyric poets like Banchs. A great artist like Mauricio Lasansky. *Litterateurs* like Borges and Ocampo. Novelists like Mallea. Dramatists like Eichelbaum. Scientists. Dreamers. Potential men of action in the world of tomorrow. Fine people who will lead Argentina's destiny. Soon. I should finish now because this article or letter is getting too long. Have I spoken from the heart about Argentina? I don't know. I don't suppose I shall ever speak from the heart as I want to. Being a writer by profession (although addicted to a good deal of silence these days) I sometimes like my work to be published. And the heart sometimes says such extraordinary things, and the world, the listening world, is so shockable and prefers order and the proper thing to disorder and what is considered to be improper. But I shall go on trying. By the way, do you know how an Englishman is quite often referred to in Argentina? *El loco inglés*. The mad Englishman. This shouldn't be a cause for diplomatic action, because it is often said in an endearing way. It really means that the Argentines don't understand English people very much and would like to, I think. And the success of that understanding depends a great deal on the English people themselves.

ALUN LEWIS

THE ORANGE GROVE

THE grey truck slowed down at the crossroads and the Army officer leaned out to read the sign post. *Indians Only*, the sign pointing to the native town read. *Dak Bungalow* straight on. 'Thank God' said Staff-Captain Beale. 'Go ahead, driver.' They were lucky, hitting a dak bungalow at dusk. They'd bivouaced the last two nights, and in the monsoon a bivouac is bad business. Tonight they'd be able to strip and sleep dry under a roof, and heat up some bully on the Tommycooker. Bloody good.

These bungalows are scattered all over India on the endless roads and travellers may sleep there, cook their food, and pass on. The rooms are bare and whitewashed, the veranda has room for a camp bed, they are quiet and remote, tended for the Government only by some old khansama or chowkey, usually a slippered and silent old Moslem. The driver pulled in and began unpacking the kit, the dry rations, the cooker, the camp bed, his blanket roll, the tin of kerosene. Beale went off to find the caretaker, whom he discovered squatting amongst the flies by the well. He was a wizened yellow-skinned old man in a soiled dhoti. Across his left breast was a plaster, loose and dripping with pus, a permanent discharge it seemed. He wheezed as he replied to the brusque request and raised himself with pain, searching slowly for his keys.

Beale came to give the driver a hand while the old man fumbled with the crockery indoors.

'The old crow is only sparking on one cylinder,' he said. 'Looks like T.B.', he added with the faint overtone of disgust which the young and healthy feel for all incurable diseases. He looked out at the falling evening, the fulgurous inflammation among the grey anchorages of cloud, the hot creeping prescience of the monsoon.

'I don't like it tonight,' he said. 'It's eerie; I can't breathe or think. This journey's getting on my nerves. What day is it? I've lost count.'

'Thursday, sir,' the driver said, 'August 25.'

'How d'you know all that?' Beale asked, curious.

'I have been thinking it out, for to write a letter tonight', the driver said. 'Shall I get the cooker going, sir? Your bed is all ready now.'

'O.K.' Beale said, sitting on his camp bed and opening his grip. He took out a leather writing pad in which he kept the notes he was making for Divisional H.Q., and all the letters he'd received from home. He began looking among the letters for one he wanted. The little dusty driver tinkered with the cooker. Sometimes Beale looked up and watched him, sometimes he looked away at the night.

This place seemed quiet enough. The old man had warned him there was unrest and rioting in the town. The lines had been cut, the oil tanks unsuccessfully attacked, the court house burnt down, the police had made lathi charges, the district magistrate was afraid to leave his bungalow. The old man had relished the violence of others. Of course you couldn't expect the 11th to go by without some riots, some deaths. Even in this remote part of Central India where the native princes ruled from their crumbling Moghul forts through their garrisons of smiling crop-headed little Ghurkas. But it seemed quiet enough here, a mile out of the town. The only chance was that some one might have seen them at the cross roads—it was so sultry, so swollen and angry, the sky, the hour. He felt for his revolver.

He threw the driver a dry box of matches from his grip. Everything they carried was fungoid with damp, the driver had been striking match after match on his wet box with a curious depressive impassivity. Funny little chap, seemed to have no initiative, as if some part of his will were paralysed. Maybe it was that wife of his he'd talked about the night before last when they had the wood fire going in the hollow. Funny. Beale had been dazed with sleep, half listening, comprehending only the surface of the slow, clumsy words. Hate. Hate. Beale couldn't understand hate. War hadn't taught it to him, war was to him only fitness, discomfort, feats of endurance, proud muscles, a career, irresponsible dissipations, months of austerity broken by 'blinds' in Cairo, or Durban, Calcutta or Bangalore or Bombay. But this little rough-head with his soiled hands and bitten nails, his odd blue eyes looking away, his mean bearing, squatting on the floor with kerosene and grease over his denims—he had plenty of hate.

... 'tried to emigrate first of all, didn't want to stay anywhere. I was fourteen, finished with reformatory schools for keeps . . . New Zealand I wanted to go. There was a school in Bristol for emigrants . . . I ran away from home but they didn't bother with me in Bristol, nacherly . . . Police sent me back. So then I become a boy in the Army, in the drums, and then I signed on. I'm a time-serving man, sir; better put another couple of branches on the fire; so I went to Palestine, against the Arabs; seen them collective farms the Jews got there, sir? Oranges . . . then I come home, so I goes on leave . . . We got a pub in our family and since my father died my mother been keeping it . . . for the colliers it is . . . never touch beer myself, my father boozed himself to death be'ind the counter. Well, my mother 'ad a barmaid, a flash dame she was, she was good for trade, fit for an answer any time, and showing a bit of her breasts every time she drew a pint. Red hair she had, well not exactly red, I don't know the word, not so *coarse* as red. My mother said for me to keep off her, my mother is a big Bible woman, though nacherly she couldn't go to chapel down our way being she kept a pub . . . Well, Monica, this barmaid, she slept in the attic, it's a big 'ouse, the Butc's Arms. And I was nineteen. You can't always answer for yourself, can you? It was my pub by rights, *mine*. She was *my* barmaid. That's how my father'd have said if he wasn't dead. My mother wouldn't have no barmaids when he was alive. Monica knew what she was doing all right. She wanted the pub and the big double bed; she couldn't wait . . . It didn't seem much to pay for sleeping with a woman like that . . . Well, then I went back to barracks, and it wasn't till I told my mate and he called me a sucker that I knew I couldn't. . . Nothing went right after that. She took good care to get pregnant, Monica did, and my mother threw her out. But it was my baby, and I married her without telling my mother. It was *my* affair, wasn't it? *Mine*.'

How long he had been in telling all this Beale couldn't remember. There was nothing to pin that evening upon; the fire and the logs drying beside the fire, the circle of crickets, the sudden blundering of moths into the warm zone of the fire and thoughtful faces, the myopic sleepy stare of fatigue, and those bitter distasteful words within intervals of thought and waiting. Not until now did Beale realize that there had been no

hard luck story told, no gambit for sympathy or compassionate leave or a poor person's divorce. But a man talking into a wood fire in the remote asylums of distance, and slowly explaining the twisted and evil curvature of his being.

'She told me she'd get her own back on me for my mother turning her out. . . And she did. . . . I know a man in my own regiment that slept with her on leave. But the kid is mine. My mother got the kid for me. She shan't spoil the kid. Nobody'll spoil the kid, neither Monica nor me. . . . I can't make it out, how is it a woman is so wonderful, I mean in a bedroom? I should 'a' murdered her, it would be better than this, this hating her all the time. Wouldn't it? . . .'

'The Tommy cooker's O.K. now, sir,' the driver said. 'The wind was blowing the flame back all the time. O.K. now with this screen. What's it to be? There's only bully left.'

'Eh? What?' Beale said. 'Oh, supper? Bully? I can't eat any more bully. Can't we get some eggs or something? Ten days with bully twice a day is plenty, can you eat bully?'

'Can't say I fancy it,' the driver said. 'I'll go down the road and see if I can get some eggs.'

'I shouldn't bother,' Beale said. 'The storm will get you if you go far. Besides, it's dangerous down the town road. They've been rioting since Ghandi and Nehru were arrested last week. Better brew up and forget about the food.'

Beale was by nature and by his job as a staff officer one who is always doing things and forgetting about them. It was convenient as well as necessary to him. His *Pending* basket was always empty. He never had a load on his mind.

'I'll take a walk just the same,' the driver said. 'Maybe I'll find a chicken laying on the road. I won't be long.'

He was a good scrounger, it was a matter of pride with him to get anything that was wanted, mosquito poles, or water or anything. And every night, whether they were in the forest or the desert plains that encompass Indore, he had announced his intention of walking down the road.

Some impulse caused Beale to delay him a moment.

'Remember,' Beale said, 'the other night, you said you saw the collective farms in Palestine?'

'Aye,' said the driver, standing in the huge deformity of the hunch-backed shadow that the lamp projected from his slovenly head.

'They were good places, those farms?' Beale asked.

'Aye, they were,' the driver said, steadying his childish gaze. 'They didn't have money, they didn't buy and sell. They shared what they had and the doctor and the school teacher the same as the labourer or the children, all the same, all living together. Orange groves they lived in, and I would like to go back there.'

He stepped down from the porch and the enormous shadows vanished from the roof and from the wall. Beale sat on, the biscuit tin of water warming slowly on the cooker, the flying ants casting their wings upon the glass of the lamp and the sheets of his bed. An orange grove in Palestine. . . . He was experiencing one of those enlargements of the imagination that come once or perhaps twice to a man, and recreate him subtly and profoundly. And he was thinking simply this—that some things are possible and other things are impossible to us. Beyond the mass of vivid and sensuous impressions which he had allowed the war to impose upon him were the quiet categories of the possible and the quieter frozen infinities of the impossible. And he must get back to those certainties. . . . The night falls, and the dance bands turn on the heat. The indolent arrive in their taxis, the popsies and the good timers, the lonely good-looking boys and the indifferent erotic women. Swing music sways across the bay from the urbane permissive ballrooms of the Taj and Green's. *In the Mood, It's foolish but it's fun*, some doughboys cracking whips in the coffee room, among apprehensive glances, the taxi drivers buy a betel leaf and spit red saliva over the running board, the panders touch the sleeves of soldiers, the crowd huddles beneath the Gateway, turning up collars and umbrellas everywhere against the thin sane arrows of the rain. And who is she whose song is the world spinning, whose lambent streams cast their curved ways about you and about, whose languors are the infinite desires of the unknowing? Is she the girl behind the grille, in the side street where they play gramophone records and you pay ten chips for a whisky and you suddenly feel a godalmighty yen for whoever it is in your arms? But beyond that, beyond that? Why had he failed with this woman, why had it been impossible with that woman? He collected the swirl of thought and knew that he could not generalize as the driver had done in the glow of the wood fire. Woman. The gardener at the boarding school he went to used to say things about women. Turvey his

name was. Turvey, the headmaster called him, but the boys had to say *Mr. Turvey*. *Mr. Turvey* didn't hold with mixed bathing, not at any price, because woman wasn't clean like man, he said. And when the boys demurred, thinking of soft pledges and film stars and the moon, *Mr. Turvey* would wrinkle his saturnine face and say, 'Course you young gentlemen knows better than me. I only been married fifteen years. I don't know nothing of course.' And maybe this conversation would be while he was emptying the ordure from the latrines into the oil drum on iron wheels which he trundled each morning down to his sewage pits in the school gardens.

But in an intenser lucidity Beale knew he must not generalize. There would be perhaps one woman out of many, one life out of many, two things possible—if life itself were possible, and if he had not debased himself among the impossibilities by then. The orange grove in Palestine. . . .

And then he realized that the water in the biscuit tin was boiling and he knelt to put the tea and tinned milk into the two enamel mugs. As he knelt a drop of rain the size of a coin pitted his back. And another. And a third. He shuddered. Ten days they'd been on the road, making this reconnaissance for a projected Army exercise, and each day had been nothing but speed and distance hollow in the head, the mileometer ticking up the daily two hundred, the dust of a hundred villages justifying their weariness with its ashes, and tomorrow also only speed and distance and the steadiness of the six cylinders. And he'd been dreaming of a Bombay whore whose red kiss he still had not washed from his arm, allowing her to enter where she would and push into oblivion the few things that were possible to him in the war and the peace. And now the rain made him shudder and he felt all the loneliness of India about him and he knew he had never been more alone. So he was content to watch the storm gather, operating against him from a heavy fulcrum in the east, lashing the bungalow and the trees, infuriating the night. The cooker spluttered and went out. He made no move to use the boiling water upon the tea. The moths flew in from the rain, and the grasshoppers and the bees. The frogs grunted and creached in the swirling mud and grass, the night was animate and violent. He waited without moving until the violence of the storm was spent. Then he looked at his watch. It was, as he

thought. The driver had been gone an hour and twenty minutes. He knew he must go and look for him.

He loaded his revolver carefully and buckled on his holster over his bush shirt. He called for the old caretaker, but there was no reply. The bungalow was empty. He turned down the wick of the lamp and putting on his cap, stepped softly into the night. It was easy to get lost. It would be difficult to find anything tonight, unless it was plumb in the main road.

His feet felt under the streaming-water for the stones of the road. The banyan tree he remembered, it was just beyond the pull-in. Its mass was over him now, he could feel it over his head. It was going to be difficult. The nearest cantonment was four hundred miles away; in any case the roads were too flooded now for him to retrace his way to Mhow. If he went on to Baroda, Ahmedabad—but the Mahi river would be in spate also. The lines down everywhere, too. They would have to go on, that he felt sure about. Before daybreak, too. It wasn't safe here. If only he could find the driver. He was irritated with the driver, irritated in a huge cloudy way, for bungling yet one more thing, for leaving him alone with so much on his hands, for insisting on looking for eggs. He'd known something would happen.

He felt the driver with his foot and knelt down over him in the swirling road and felt for his heart under his sodden shirt and cursed him in irritation and concern. Dead as a duckboard, knifed. The rain came on again and he tried to lift up the corpse the way he'd been taught, turning it first on to its back and standing firmly astride it. But the driver was obstinate and heavy and for a long time he refused to be lifted up.

He carried the deadweight back up the road, sweating and bitched by the awkward corpse, stumbling and trying in vain to straighten himself. What a bloody mess, he kept saying; I told him not to go and get eggs; did he have to have eggs for supper? It became a struggle between himself and the corpse, who was trying to slide down off his back and stay lying on the road. He had half a mind to let it have its way.

He got back eventually and backed himself against the veranda like a lorry, letting the body slide off his back; the head fell crack against the side wall and he said 'Sorry,' and put a sack between the cheek and the ground. The kid was soaking wet

and wet red mud in his hair; he wiped his face up a bit with cotton-waste and put a blanket over him while he packed the kit up and stowed it in the truck. He noticed the tea and sugar in the mugs and tried the temper of the water. It was too cold. He regretted it. He had the truck packed by the end of half an hour, his own bedding roll stretched on top of the baggage ready for the passenger. He hoped he'd be agreeable this time. He resisted a bit but he had stiffened a little and was more manageable. He backed him into the truck and then climbed in, pulling him on to the blanket by his armpits. Not until he'd put up the tailboard and got him all ready did he feel any ease. He sighed. They were away. He got into the driving seat to switch on the ignition. Then he realized there was no key. He felt a momentary panic. But surely the driver had it. He slipped out and, in the darkness and the drive of the rain, searched in the man's pockets. Paybook, matches, identity discs (must remember that, didn't even know his name), at last the keys.

He started the engine and let her warm up, slipped her into second and drove slowly out. The old caretaker never appeared, and Beale wondered whether he should say anything of his suspicions regarding the old man when he made his report. Unfortunately, there was no evidence. Still, they were away from there; he sighed with relief as the compulsion under which he had been acting relaxed. He had this extra sense, of which he was proud, of being able to feel the imminence of danger as others feel a change in the weather; it didn't help him in Libya, perhaps it hindered him there; but in a pub in Durban it had got him out in the nick of time; he'd edged for the door before a shot was fired. He knew tonight all right. The moment he saw that dull red lever of storm raised over his head, and the old caretaker had shrugged his shoulders after his warning had been laughed off. You had to bluff them; only sometimes bluff wasn't enough and then you had to getaway, face or no face. Now he tried to remember the route on the map; driving blind, the best thing was to go slow and pull in somewhere a few miles on. Maybe the sun would rise sometime and he could dry out the map and work out the best route; no more native towns for him; he wanted to get to a cantonment if possible. Otherwise he'd look for the police lines at Dohad or Jabhua or wherever the next place was. But every time he thought of pulling in,

a disinclination to stop the engine made him keep his drenched ammunition boot on the accelerator pedal. When he came to a road junction he followed his fancy; there is such a thing as letting the car do the guiding.

He drove for six hours before the night stirred at all. Then his red-veined eyes felt the slight lessening in the effectiveness of the headlights that presaged the day. When he could see the red berm of the road and the flooded paddy-fields lapping the bank, he at last pulled up under a tree and composed himself over the wheel, placing his cheek against the rim, avoiding the horn at the centre. He fell at once into a stiff rigid sleep.

A tribe of straggling gipsies passed him soon after dawn. They made no sound, leading their mules and camels along the soft berm on the other side of the road, mixing their own ways with no other's. The sun lay back of the blue rain-clouds, making the earth steam. The toads hopped out of the mud and rested under the stationary truck. Land-crabs came out of the earth and sat on the edge of their holes. Otherwise no one passed. The earth seemed content to let him have his sleep out. He woke about noon, touched by the sun as it passed.

He felt guilty. Guilty of neglect of duty, having slept at his post? Then he got a grip on himself and rationalized the dreadful guilt away. What could he have done about it? The driver had been murdered. What did they expect him to do? Stay there and give them a second treat? Stay there and investigate? Or get on and report it. Why hadn't he reported it earlier? How could he? The lines were down, the roads flooded behind him, he was trying his best; he couldn't help sleeping for a couple of hours. Yet the guilt complex persisted. It was bad dream and he had some evil in him, a soft lump of evil in his brain. But why? If he'd told the man to go for eggs it would be different. He was bound to be all right as long as he had his facts right. Was there an accident report to be filled in immediately, in duplicate, Army Form B- something-or-other? He took out his notebook, but the paper was too wet to take his hard pencil. 2300 hrs. on 23 August 1942 deceased stated his desire to get some eggs. I warned him that disturbances of a political character had occurred in the area. . . . He shook himself, bleary and sore-throated, in his musty overalls, and thought a shave and some food would put him right. He went round to the back of the

truck. The body had slipped with the jolting of the road. He climbed in and looked at the ashen face. The eyes were closed, the face had sunk into an expressionless inanition, it made him feel indifferent to the whole thing. Poor sod. Where was his hate now? Was he grieving that the woman, Mona was it, would get a pension out of him now? Did he still hate her? He seemed to have let the whole matter drop. Death was something without hate in it. But he didn't want to do anything himself except shave and eat and get the whole thing buttoned up. He tore himself away from the closed soiled face and ferreted about for his shaving kit. He found it at last, and after shaving in the muddy rain-water he ate a few hard biscuits and stuffed a few more into his pocket. Then he lashed the canvas down over the tail-board and got back to the wheel. The truck was slow to start. The bonnet had been leaking and the plugs were wet in the cylinder heads. She wouldn't spark for a minute or two. Anxiety swept over him. He cursed the truck viciously. Then she sparked on a couple of cylinders, stuttered for a minute as the others dried out, and settled down steadily. He ran her away carefully and again relaxed. He was dead scared of being stranded with the body. There wasn't even a shovel on the truck.

After driving for an hour he realized he didn't know where he was. He was in the centre of a vast plain of paddy-fields, lined by raised bunds and hedged with cactus along the road. White herons and tall fantastic cranes stood by the pools in the hollows. He pulled up to try and work out his position. But his map was nowhere to be found. He must have left it at the dak bungalow in his haste. He looked at his watch; it had stopped. Something caved in inside him, a sensation of panic, of an enemy against whose machinations he had failed to take the most elementary precautions. He was lost.

He moved on again at once. There was distance. The mileometer still measured something? By sunset he would do so many miles. How much of the day was left? Without the sun how could he tell? He was pannicky at not knowing these things; he scarcely knew more than the man in the back of the truck. So he drove on and on, passing nobody but a tribe of gipsies with their mules and camels, and dark peasants driving their bullocks knee-deep in the alluvial mud before their simple wooden ploughs. He drove as fast as the track would allow;

in some places it was flooded and narrow, descending to narrow causeways swept by brown streams which he only just managed to cross. He drove till the land was green with evening, and in the crepuscular uncertainty he halted and decided to kip down for the night. He would need petrol; it was kept in tins in the back of the truck; it meant pulling the body out, or making him sit away in a corner. He didn't want to disturb the kid. He'd been jolted all day; and now this indignity. He did all he had to do with a humility that was alien to him. Respect he knew; but this was more than respect; obedience and necessity he knew, but this was more than either of these. It was somehow an admission of the integrity of the man, a new interest in what he was and what he had left behind. He got some soap and a towel, after filling his tanks, and when he had washed himself he propped the driver up against the tailboard and sponged him clean and put P.T. shoes on his feet instead of the boots that had so swollen his feet. When he had laid him out on the blankets and covered him with a sheet, he rested from his exertions, and as he recovered his breath he glanced covertly at him, satisfied that he had done something for him. What would the woman have done, Monica? Would she have flirted with him? Most women did, and he didn't discourage them. But this woman, my God, he'd bloody well beat her up. It was her doing, this miserable end, this mess-up. He hadn't gone down the road to get eggs; he'd gone to get away from her. It must have been a habit of his, at nights, to compose himself. She'd bitched it all. He could just see her. And she still didn't know a thing about him, not the first thing. Yes, he hated her all right, the voluptuous bitch.

He slept at the wheel again, falling asleep with a biscuit still half chewed in his mouth. He had erotic dreams, this woman Monica drawing him a pint, and her mouth and her breasts and the shallow taunting eyes; and the lights in her attic bedroom with the door ajar, and the wooden stairs creaking. And the dawn then laid its grey fingers upon him and he woke with the same feeling of guilt and shame, a grovelling debased mood, that had seized him the first morning. He got up, stretching himself, heady with vertigo and phlegm, and washed himself in the paddy flood. He went round to the back of the truck to get some biscuits. He got them quietly, the boy was still sleeping,

and he said to himself that he would get him through today, honest he would. He had to.

The sun came out and the sky showed a young summer blue. The trees wakened and shook soft showers of rain off their leaves. Hills showed blue as lavender and when he came to the cross-roads he steered north-west by the sun, reckoning to make the coast road somewhere near Baroda. There would be a cantonment not far from there, and a Service dump for coffins, and someone to whom he could make a report. It would be an immense relief. His spirits rose. Driving was tricky; the worn treads of the tyres tended to skid, the road wound up and down the ghats, through tall loose scrub; but he did not miss seeing the shy jungle wanderers moving through the bush with their bows, tall lithe men like fauns with black hair over their eyes that were like grapes. They would stand a moment under a tree, and glide away back into the bush. There were villages now, and women of light olive skin beating their saris on the stones, rhythmically, and their breasts uncovered.

And then, just when he felt he was out of the lost zones, in the late afternoon, he came down a long sandy track through cactus to a deep and wide river at which the road ended. A gipsy tribe was fording it and he watched them to gauge the depth of the river. The little mules, demure as mice, kicked up against the current, nostrils too near the water to neigh; the camels followed the halter, stately as bishops, picking their calm way. The babies sat on their parents' heads, the women unwound their saris and put them in a bundle on their crowns, the water touched their breasts. And Beale pushed his truck into bottom gear and nosed her cautiously into the stream. Midway across the brown tide swept up to his sparking plugs and the engine stopped. He knew at once that he was done for. The river came up in waves over the sideboards and his whole concern was that the boy inside would be getting wet. A gipsy waded past impersonally, leading two bright-eyed grey mules. Beale hailed him. He nodded and went on. Beale called out 'Help!' the gipsies gathered on the far bank and discussed it. He waved and eventually three of them came wading out to him. He knew he must abandon the truck till a recovery section could be sent out to salvage it, but he must take his companion with him, naturally. When the gipsies reached him he pointed to the back of the

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truck, unlaced the tarpaulin and showed them the corpse. They nodded their heads gravely. Their faces were serious and hard. He contrived to show them what he wanted and when he climbed in they helped him intelligently to hoist the body out. They contrived to get it onto their heads, ducking down under the tailboard till their faces were submerged in the scum of the flood.

They carried him ashore that way, Beale following with his revolver and webbing. They held a conclave on the sand while the women wrung out their saris and the children crowded about the body. Beale stood in the centre of these lean outlandish men, not understanding a word. They talked excitedly, abruptly, looking at him and at the corpse. He fished his wallet out of his pocket and showed them a five-rupee note. He pointed to the track and to the mules. They nodded and came to some domestic agreement. One of them led a little mule down to the stream and they strapped a board across its bony moulting back, covering the board with sacking. Four of them lifted the body up and lashed it along the spar. Then they smiled at Beale, obviously asking for his approval of their skill. He nodded back and said 'That's fine'. The gipsies laid their panniers on the mules, the women wound their saris about their swarthy bodies, called their children, formed behind their men. The muleteer grinned and nodded his head to Beale. The caravanserai went forward across the sands. Beale turned back once to look at the truck, but he was too bloody tired and fed up to mind. It would stay there; it was settled in; if the floods rose it would disappear; if they fell so much the better. He couldn't help making a balls of it all. He had the body, that was one proof; they could find the truck if they came to look for it, that was the second proof. If they wanted an accident report they could wait. If they thought he was puddled they could sack him when they liked. What was it all about, anyway?

Stumbling up the track in the half-light among the ragged garish gipsies he gradually lost the stiff self-consciousness with which he had first approached them. He was thinking of a page near the beginning of a history book he had studied in the Sixth at school in 1939. About the barbarian migrations in pre-history; the Celts and Iberians, Goths and Vandals and Huns. Once Life had been nothing worth recording beyond the movements of

people like these, camels and asses piled with the poor property of their days, panniers, rags, rope, gramm and dahl, lambs and kids too new to walk, barefooted, long-haired people rank with sweat, animals shivering with ticks, old women striving to keep up with the rest of the family. He kept away from the labouring old women, preferring the tall girls who walked under the primitive smooth heads of the camels. He kept his eye on the corpse, but he seemed comfortable enough. Except he was beginning to corrupt. There was a faint whiff of badness about him. . . . What did the gipsies do? They would burn him, perhaps, if the journey took too long. How many days to Baroda? The muleteer nodded his head and grinned.

Well, as long as he had the man's identity discs and paybook, he would be covered. He must have those. . . . He slipped the identity discs over the wet blue head and matted hair and put them in his overall pocket. He would be alright now, even if they burned him. . . . It would be a bigger fire than the one they had sat by and fed with twigs and talked about women together that night, how many nights ago?

He wished, though, that he knew where they were going. They only smiled and nodded when he asked. Maybe they weren't going anywhere much, except perhaps to some pasture, to some well.

AUGUSTUS JOHN

FRAGMENT OF AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY—XI

IN the year of the Peace Conference, 1919, I repaired to Paris to collect material for a memorial of that event, just as lately I had been employed on the Western Front under the ægis of Lord Beaverbrook in recording some aspects of the war as it affected the Canadian Corps in particular.

Soon after arriving I had the good fortune to fall in with an old friend, Señor Don Jose-Antonio de Gandarillas, a Chilean from Chelsea.

With great good nature, he proposed that I should make use of an apartment, of which he had two, giving on the Rond Point, at the corner of Avenue Montaigne. I jumped at this offer, for I had found no convenient place to do my work in and here I was within easy reach both of the Hotel Majestic, home of the British Delegation and of the Quay d'Orsay itself. If Paris at that time was the political hub of Europe, or indeed of the world, No. 19 Avenue Montaigne, might be described as socially the very vortex or navel of that city. Gandarillas, humorist and arbiter elegantiarum, then at the height of his popularity, entertained largely. His spacious apartment, contiguous to my more modest one, was thronged nightly by members of the *beau monde*. An orchestra, accommodated on the landing, played ceaselessly or at any rate every night. This circumstance, making sleep impossible, forced me to seek an alternative in the ballroom next door, where Heaven knows I found as dream-like a world as any I had been deprived of!

I had, of course, danced before. As a schoolboy I had been properly drilled in such measures as the Polka, the Waltz and the Pas de Quatre, but since then had only practised them fitfully, and without method or instruction.

Here in the sympathetic yet firm hands of Cecile Sorel or some equally elegant and experienced partner (if any such could be said to exist) I began to make up for past neglect. I could not have attended a better school. Indulgent as they were to my faults, the ladies all the same were determined to rub them down. When my steps, depending as they did rather on inspiration than memory, went astray, my partners' agility and tact always proved equal to the occasion and averted disaster.

Perhaps, in this unaccustomed ambience, where, to begin with, I knew no one but my host, and feeling shy, didn't want to obtrude myself at all but would have been content, for a while, to stand apart in a corner and just watch the scene, I was received with all the greater good-nature by the brilliant personages to whom Gandarillas insisted on introducing me and who at once tried their best to make me 'feel at home'. I wasn't likely, certainly, to court notice by giving myself airs which would have deceived no one. In any case my sensibility in which pride and modesty are about equally balanced would have refused to assume a rôle incompatible with either.

I couldn't pretend to be at ease all at once, having little but my natural awkwardness to recommend me (but that seemed somehow endearing); plus a certain independence of spirit, always liable under provocation to get out of hand (in this society, qualities like defects require control if not at times concealment); and for the rest, an unexpected strain of impudicity would crop up, which, always ridiculous, provoked nothing but laughter. In fact, as you will have guessed, I had no manners to speak of, which at least is better than having bad ones.

And so my education proceeded. During these exercises *à deux* the possibility gradually dawned on me that under a smart corsage and those twin accessories it partly dissimulates, beats, as like as not, a warm, tender and even fragile heart. Similarly, when the draperies of convention, which disguise our inharmonious and decrepit civilization, are, for a moment removed or parted, we may catch a glimpse, not only of corruption but also of beauty, remote as the stars; and they, we know, shine even when invisible to us and move in obedience to a Rule, we seem to have forgotten, but which by rights should govern our own motions too.

But listen! I hear the band. It always plays the same tune: 'There are smiles which make you happy; there are smiles which make you sad.' I shall get it by heart soon. My slacks have been pressed, my shoes, my sam-brown, my buttons polished. Trust Tony's butler for that! I wonder if the Princess will come tonight. . . .

It must not be supposed that I passed all my Paris evenings in this style. Far from it. There were other haunts, more shadowy, across the river, which called me now, as they used to do and will again. A kind of *nostalgie de la boue* you would say. A few old friends still roamed the Quartier. Maurice Cremnitz, safe back and only slightly damaged from the war (which he 'wouldn't have missed for anything'), ordered just as he used to do a second dinner to supplement his first. His appetite hadn't suffered. But the Cercle of the Closerie des Lilas was disbanded. Paul Fort had become respectable and aimed at the Académie. Jean Moreas was dead and buried ('Surtout pas de fleurs artificielles' his last words). Ortiz de Zarate continued to pursue a precarious and completely unsuccessful career only varied by periodic crises of acute megalomania—to make up for it. Modigliani and Pascin

had both committed suicide. Thelma and Bernice had not yet arrived from the States, and less interesting oddities gathered in the Select Bar. There was certainly Louise L——, and she in her insane way was a welcome distraction. Incalculable as ever, who would have foreseen that one day prison doors were to close upon her beauty? After all, I decided, there was a lot to be said for the right Bank. The truth is, my uniform, so convenient and becoming in the neighbourhood of the Arc de Triomphe, seemed out of place in Montparnasse. Formerly, Cremnitz used to say, I bore a close resemblance to Robinson Crusoe, but now...? I was conscious of causing my friends embarrassment when I, like them, began to doubt my own identity. But I was all right chez Fouquet and one evening I was approaching that agreeable resort when for the second time I met the Duchesse de Gramont. I had been presented to this lady at a party given by Driant, a kind of artist, and had been immediately struck by her picturesque appearance. Plunging along at speed, I had just time to recognize and salute her as I passed, and was rewarded with an enchanting smile. With quick decision I turned and in a few moments had overtaken my amiable subject who, unhurried, was strolling homeward in her graceful Italian way. I escorted her to her residence along the Avenue and took my leave with the promise that she was to sit for me the next day. I had wasted no time. And thus I got launched on my task of commemorating the Peace Conference...

The Hotel Majestic lodged the members of the British Delegation. I made a practice of frequenting it, for in the hall or restaurant were to be seen everybody of importance connected with the British part of the Conference, and it was my business to make myself known to them—or some of them—and persuade them to give me sittings for a composition I had in view. Though this project was never carried out, I succeeded in making a number of individual studies for it. These included the Colonial Premiers, Borden of Canada, Hughes of Australia, and Massey of New Zealand. Next, Lords Sumner and Cunliffe, representing Law and Finance, submitted to my brush. Then the Emir Faisal, who encouraged by T. E. Lawrence, posed for his portrait. I did in fact two pictures of him, one of which Lawrence himself acquired. Lawrence, with whom I became very friendly, helped to beguile the tedium of the Emir's sittings with what appeared to be light

conversation, in Arabic; so did that remarkable woman Gertrude Bell. The Maharajah of Bikaner also posed for me, a magnificent figure! He being much taken with the Duchesse de Gramont invited her to his Capital; but on her stipulating that I should come too, showed less enthusiasm. I became acquainted with and was to have painted General Botha, a man I profoundly admired, but unfortunately he died before this could be done. Lawrence, who enjoyed sitting for his portrait, posed for me frequently both at that time and since, for our friendship continued till his death in Dorset. He once told me he didn't think his *Seven Pillars* a success, but hoped to write something better some day. He gave me a copy of this work, stipulating that I should not scruple to sell it if need be. This in fact I did later, for I wanted a new car. When I told him the price I had received, £400, he cheerfully remarked, 'Not bad'. Lawrence was no ladies' man and refused to be drawn out by a distinguished exploratory Frenchwoman who had been in the desert—though not very far—and wanted him to join in her ecstatic reminiscences of the nights of Baghdad or Aleppo. Lawrence, looking at his plate, said that for his part he had found them extremely smelly. The lady, *contrariée*, turned for help to our host, the Emir, but that imperturbable potentate remained politely neutral. I thought the gigantic Negro slave (liberated) who guarded his master with a drawn sword looked as though he would have liked to cut this conversation short. The feast was too good not to claim our whole attention, and silence, punctuated of course by an occasional eructation, its best accompaniment. Ah, those Arabian sweetmeats! I began to realize what Europe had lost in culture by the expulsion of the Moors. Lawrence was regarded by the Arabs with almost superstitious wonder mingled with amusement. 'That man is a devil', said Faisal; for he seemed to have the gift of ubiquity or at least to move about as if provided with a magic carpet when, actually, he only employed an aeroplane.

When T. E. made one of his unauthorized disappearances from Paris, General Thwaites, a first-rate officer I believe, who was in command, but one all out for spit, polish and punctilio, smelling a rat, cabled to the authorities at Cairo to prohibit Lawrence's movements beyond a certain area, should he appear there. He did appear there, for I understand he wanted a chat with Allenby and perhaps had further designs. On his return (in mufti) he

entered the Majestic and, meeting Thwaites, demanded an apology for what he considered an affront. Thwaites, fuming, asked him if he didn't know his rank. 'Yes,' said Lawrence, 'and if you'll wait a minute I'll go and put on my uniform and return for that apology or you'll take a beating.' Thwaites, a good strategist, decided for the first alternative and managed to appease the rebellious firebrand. Honour was satisfied and friendly relations re-established. Lawrence passed a good deal of his time nosing about in book-shops. He hadn't much use for female company, with a few exceptions, such as Gertrude Bell and later my wife, with whom or to whom he was ready to talk for hours, as she put it, 'nineteen to the dozen'. He was keenly interested in Art, but we by no means always saw eye to eye. He offended me once by refusing to admit any merit in that master of exquisite evasion, Gainsborough. Music, too, was a hobby of his. At his cottage in Dorset he had collected a very fine library of records. It was there that I first heard my friend Heseltine's *Capriola*. But let us leave our chuckling philosopher for a moment.

In a turning off the Rond Point was to be found 'Footits Bar'. Footit was of course the famous English clown who, on retiring from the circus upon which he had shed such lustre, set up as a publican. This great man unfortunately was no longer to be seen behind the zinc counter, for he had made another retirement, and this time for good. It was left to his widow to carry on the business, and this she did most adequately. An Englishwoman of mature charms, she presided in black satin, her majestic frontage adorned by a pendant gold watch and numerous articles of jewellery, all in perfect taste. Bi-lingual and fluent, she was a match for any customer, and her serene and dignified presence was in itself enough to discourage any retrogression of speech or conduct on the part of the clientèle, who properly in awe of her pre-eminent respectability, always preserved a nice decorum. Thus the atmosphere of the little Bar was one of pleasant and polite familiarity. One could even, such was the elasticity of the establishment, make a good homely meal in the little room at the back, though Mde. Footit made no profession of running a restaurant. The Comte de Gouy d'Arcy and I sometimes made use of this retreat as a convenient offset to the tiring monotony of more fashionable *milieux*.

Princess Violette Murat, too, who knew every *boite* in Paris, was also familiar with this one. Not all her frequentations were as discreet, for as a curious student of life she would boldly penetrate into environments which would have dismayed less courageous spirits and which certainly put my own sang-froid to the test. Like the famous Marshal who became King of Naples, his descendant could never be accused of timidity; only she was perhaps less careful of her good looks than he who cried '*Visez le cœur!*' as he faced the firing squad.

The Princess had been brought up in England by the Empress Eugenie and was nothing if not Napoleonic. Her two daughters, Pauline and Caroline, perpetuate the Imperial tradition. When entering the Café Royal in Regent Street she perceived the initial 'N.' emblazoned in the floor of the foyer, she was delighted, thinking it the best of omens. I didn't tell her that this stood, not for Napoleon but for Nichols. Asking her once if she read *L'Action Française*, she shrieked in horror and answered, 'Non, *L'Humanité!*' Although she had tried her hand at sculpture, she showed a marked indifference to Art or at any rate modern painting. 'I will never have any pictures on my walls!' 'Where then would you put them: on the ceiling?' '*Dans les musées,*' she replied shortly. I was annoyed by this and in revenge never painted her portrait (which may have been a blessing). Violette Murat had fine eyes and perfect feet and although rather crazy, was a great and lovable woman.

* * *

At the Gramont's house, hotel or palace, which looked more like a fortress, in the Avenue des Champs Elysées, a *thé dansant* was taking place. An assiduous South American dancing-master was showing his paces. Members of the Faubourg St. Germain were present, inaccessible and dowdy. The Duke, tall, elderly and gracious, was doing the honours: ('The President', as his wife called him.) In addition to tea, port was provided. I was helping myself to a glass of the latter beverage when my attention was drawn to an extraordinary figure moving with unequalled grace and distinction among the dancers. It belonged to a lady attired with rich and rather bizarre elegance; her enormous eyes liberally set-off with mascara, gazed about her with confidence and amusement. Her parted lips revealed a

dazzling *râtelier*. A mane of canary-coloured hair was surmounted by a black hat encircled by a broad gold torque. Our eyes met and presently I found myself presented to the Marchesa Casati. It was the beginning of a long association which is not yet dissolved. Like everybody else, she was a friend of Tony Gandarillas and figured frequently at his parties. Many were the tales told of her, and the prodigality of her entertainments in Venice and Rome in which, so it was said, she would appear like some antique goddess, seated in a chariot drawn by a team of leopards. I have only met one other woman comparable in style, and that was another Italian, the Contessa Bosdari. It wasn't long before I had embarked on a picture of the Marchesa. By this time Gandarillas having left Paris, I had moved to the Quai Malaquais, where I had been lent a studio and apartment. I was still engaged on Maria Gramont's portrait. As these two ladies, though ostensibly friends, were in reality far from cordial, I endeavoured, as well as I could, to keep them apart, for a collision in my studio might have been upsetting and have hindered the progress of my work. There was a moment when such a contretemps was only averted by rapid action on my part. I had by mistake arranged for both to sit for me at the same hour. The Duchess arrived first, and by this time, realizing my blunder, I made a pretence of feeling disinclined to paint, needing above all a little exercise in the air. Accordingly we took a stroll along the river-side, and by the time we returned the Marchesa had come and gone. All was well. Both of these portraits were more or less successfully completed except for an unfinished hand in each case; but nowadays, are hands ever finished? The Marchesa had plenty of distinguished admirers: D'Annunzio, who gave her the torque and a motor-launch; Dr. Munthe, who lent her his famous villa at Anacapri (where she perhaps over-stayed her welcome). When we had Munthe to lunch at the Tour Eiffel, Louisa plied him with wine to wake him up from his morbid reveries; for he said to me, 'I have always been more interested in death than in life'. There was an evening at 14, Cheyne Walk, when Count Carlo Sforza and I humorously disputed the favours of the macaronic wonder who sat between us, laughing delightedly. The genial Aga Khan made a shrewd remark at lunch one day. Mentioning Evan Morgan, who was in Paris at the time, and his recent conversion to the Catholic Faith, he said, 'Evan Morgan

s'est fait Catholique par volupté. I found 'Beppo' Garibaldi a charming fellow, bearing philosophically his modest position as son of a great man. We went to see Charlie Chaplin in 'Shoulder Arms'. It was a great joy to see these two Wops writhing in laughter. But the Casati's best *cavalier servant* was young Prince Giraci, whose life she had, by a skilful bluff, saved on the Piave. Being quite helpless, she always had to have somebody to buy her tickets, run her errands and generally make himself useful. As for the Marquis Bourbon del Monte, too much of a faithful dog, she treated him like dirt. Once, unable to bear the sight of his face any longer, she ordered him out of the taxi: '*Voilà la femme que j'aime*,' he said to me, in tears, as he obediently disembarked.

This spoilt child of a woman used to make me, not cry, but laugh immoderately. Her running commentary on people, including her best friends, was, if not invariably just, always racy, mischievous and epigrammatic. She disdained the mellifluous accents, the choice vocabulary of other well-brought-up people, and expressed herself with the uncompromising directness of a peasant but yet, credulous as a savage, was ever at the mercy of the first impostor. The loss of her fortune seems only to have confirmed her faith in her Star and the conviction of its eventual ascendancy. She meets all her tribulations with unconcern. But while she is allowed to live, though precariously, in a house which once was Byron's, what else is there to worry about beyond the necessities of her cat?

Among other people who sat to me in Paris were Monsieur Hymans, the cultured Belgian delegate, and Lord Robert (now Viscount) Cecil. Under the latter's leadership I joined, more recently, in a political demonstration. The occasion being a meeting convened to petition the Prime Minister (Chamberlain) to recognize the legal right of the Spanish Republic to buy arms with which to oppose the Fascist insurrection under Franco. The petition having been drawn up, its supporters led by his Lordship proceeded to Downing Street, where it was deposited at No. 10: and that was that.

Last though not least, there was Princess Bibesco. Her tireless conversational brilliance proved too much for three or four members of the Foreign Office with whom we dined one evening, and though ordinarily anything but dumb, these young gentlemen,

one by one, dropped out of the running: their eyes alone still spoke with the eloquence of which their tongues had been bereft. As I escorted Elizabeth to her hotel, I myself seemed to shine with some faint radiance of reflected glory. . . .

* * *

In my painting-room hanging over the fireplace was a picture by Picasso. It consisted (apparently) of various irregularly shaped cuttings of assorted wall-papers, a portion of *Le Journal* and (I think) some evidence of part of a guitar. This work caused me no particular discomfort until I was told by Gandarillas that it was a portrait of his aunt, Madame Errazuriz, a lady I knew very well. This information made it all the more difficult for me to explain the picture to my curious visitors, for the resemblance was in no way striking. Rather than attempt to dispel an incomprehension which I shared myself, I took the portrait down and concealed it. I felt my friend Roger Fry alone possessed the genius of interpretation which the situation called for. Had I been smarter and less scrupulous, I would have found a means of satisfying my tiresome inquirers, or at least of silencing them, by a display of profundity, owing less to the processes of pure reason than to a facile acquaintance with the slip-slop caconyms of artistical pickle-herrings à la mode; this, if in no sense leading to enlightenment, would produce a pleasant thrill of mystification which would be just as good and redound equally to the credit of the masterpiece in question and my own powers of exegesis, and no one would have been the worse off, unless it were Madame Errazuriz herself, who having hitherto enjoyed a well-merited notoriety for beauty and charm, would now be compelled to face a more searching appraisal in the light of criteria totally unrelated to the direct and simple testimony of the visual sense upon which she had so far with justice relied.

The busy collector of cultural tips is less concerned to liquidate his ignorance than to conceal it. Rather than take a bath he will change his shirt. To guard against familiarity he will assume a mask. This may be a tasteful variant of those used in the New Hebrides, but being made of cellophane is transparent and highly inflammable. Fire feeds on rubbish, but the jewel of Truth is incombustible. Our fashionable art-taster does well to keep agog: his eyes are already independently swivelled, but he needs a

third to keep watch from that most vocal but most exposed of his defences, the back of his neck.

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Paris was settling down to the Great Peace. Only the terms to be imposed on the defeated Powers were in dispute. From my contact with those in the know, I learnt that our politicians easily outmatched the French in astuteness and agility. 'They walked round them in circles.' A general air of facetious complacency reigned. At the Majestic, Smuts alone seemed oppressed with misgivings. Massey described the proceedings at the Conference as farcical. Hughes, looking like a juggled hare, was learning French . . . Eric Sutton, during our semi-private sub-conferences at Fouquet's, introduced an agreeable strain of Aristotelean mellowness which became more and more marked as the sitting lengthened. Lloyd George, officiously guarded by young Harmsworth, as if he were some holy man in meditation, was unapproachable; but his secretary, Miss Stevenson, remained enchantingly human besides being superlatively intelligent. Evan Morgan, in his vaulting ambition, even proposed—but that's another story. Orpen, the pet of the bourgeoisie, seemed ever preoccupied with rich, and, I suspected, *influential* people, and one saw little of him. This art-major's prolonged, exclusive and almost hallowed association with a pretty ally, had never inspired him to acquire a word of her language, for he found his native monosyllabic drollery served every purpose, (except that of a prophylactic). The Press magnate, Lord Riddell, consistently forgot to attach his boots, which gaping, became mixed up, gracelessly, with his trousers; the laces trailed behind. On the other hand, President Wilson, as he got into his carriage outside the Crillon, for a Saviour, looked almost too opulent and debonair, as he flashed his teeth and raised his shining topper in acknowledgement of the cheers of some of the saved.

Freddy Guest and I sometimes ventured off the beaten track in search of the popular life. But it was like hiring a rod to go fishing on a Bank-holiday. The fish don't always rise to the occasion. Freddy Guest seemed to think I knew Paris. I never shall. As if a stranger could ever know a city which, like a woman, is schizophrenic but in a thousand ways! A city of fulfilment and deception, of grandeur and misery, saintliness and shame. But

does anybody know it? The respectable old gentlemen who gather every evening at the Café to play cards? Or the workmen swallowing their morning nip in the bistro, *pour tuer le ver*? Or the employés in their mass-produced overcoats, hurrying to their offices while reading the paper? Or who then? Perhaps the latest catch of corpses laid out in the establishment behind the flying buttresses of Notre Dame could have told us something—if they hadn't swallowed so much of the Seine. . . .

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In the immense Hall of the Conference, I have found room within a high window-niche, and from this point of vantage make sketches of the Delegates. Speech follows speech in different languages. The assembly wilts with boredom. At last a gentleman from Paraguay brings his peroration to an end. Instantly Clemenceau rises: '*Messieurs, la séance est levée.*' Mr. Balfour wakes up with a start and we all troop out.

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With the advent of jazz, the integrity of the French Capital was compromised for ever. It was useless for Jean Cocteau to play (and not so well either) the kettle-drum at his new fashionable bar, Rue St. Honoré. One was not comforted. To a lessening extent were the places of entertainment invaded by soldiers on leave, determined to forget for a while their slimy ditches; the shattering whine of shells; the perpetual rattle of Death. The Casino de Paris, especially, no longer seethed with a tumult of maddened escapists in khaki. Pleasure-seeking was now, perhaps, less feverish, but more cold-blooded and calculating. Except for a few little clouds on the horizon, the sky was clear and the weather looked promising. The war was won: now for the Peace. . . .

I lead a kind of multiple existence, forgathering with all sorts and conditions. There were moments when I experienced what the Welsh call *hiraeth*, when I would have swapped everything for, say, a pint or two of beer with that old lion, Tom Mann, in a Liverpool pub, or a turn at evening on the Galway quays; or a scrap with the gypsies at Bettws-Gwerfil-Goch.

The merits of some recent innovations at this period were open to doubt. New and mysterious establishments made their

appearance in the by-ways of Montmartre, where painted gynanders writhed and ranted in falsetto before a congregation of awe-struck globe-trotters. Veritable Saturnalia were reported to be held on prearranged nights in the Bois de Boulogne. In at least one place it was possible for the privileged to witness reputable ladies submit themselves eagerly to painful humiliations to which the presence of an audience added an extra sting. The Grand Guignol was billing *L'Atroce Volupté*, the success of the season. The ultra-chic practised opium-smoking religiously; 'Coco' and other drugs were at a premium. . . .

These symptoms of social decomposition may have had some entertainment value, but in my simplicity I found more than enough to wonder at in the common kaleidoscope of life. Beauty, character and drama, if not staring you in the face, may be hiding round the corner. . . . As I have remarked above, I sometimes sighed for a rather more primitive environment than that provided by the biggest city in the world—if you leave out the slums. The noisy animation of the Boulevards soon infects the sober onlooker with a kind of despair, from which there is no escape but in day-dream or action. The first may transport him to less crowded resorts where he can arrange events according to his fancy; the second will possibly land him in further disillusion. But the Conference was over and my duties done. I wasn't going to wait for the signing of the Treaty. Paris, the best place to work, was the worst to be idle in. It was time to go home. '*Garçon, l'addition!*'

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I WAS sitting in the Café du Dôme, when the waiter handed me a note. It was anonymous and illiterate. Deciphering it with difficulty, I made out that my correspondent had composed it in the belief that he had chastised me publicly the day before in the Avenue de l'Opéra! He asked 'How had I liked that? Perhaps I would know better now how to treat a lady: but beware! I was closely watched. We have not finished with you yet!' There were further expressions indicative of strong personal dislike which I will not record. I concluded from this that some innocent person other than myself, and no doubt resembling me (I am a common enough type), had suffered a severe handling in vicarious expiation of my misdeeds. While

sympathizing with my unfortunate counterpart I could not altogether regret the mistake which had been made. The crime which my would-be assailant had taken upon himself, or been hired, to avenge, could only have been, as far as I could remember, an unceremonious and rapid withdrawal from Mme Strindberg's proximity. Such a breach of good-manners I confess to have more than once been guilty of, for I could think of no other means of escape from a conjunction of circumstances which I found unpalatable and which, moreover, I had never sought. In any case I knew by experience that my solitude would be only temporary, for Mme Strindberg, once on the scent, always displayed the unerring instinct and tenacity of a bloodhound. More as a matter of form then, than in the hope of throwing off pursuit, I transferred myself to the Closerie des Lilas to await events. Had I not been assured of being henceforth constantly under observation? The chivalrous agents of my Austrian friend might have erred once, but were unlikely a second time to mistake my identity. The accurate delivery of the warning letter bore witness to this. Sure enough my calculations proved correct. Fabian de Castro, whose loyalty to me was tempered by interest, suddenly appeared on the scene in a great state of agitation. Madame was outside in a taxi and implored me to see her. '*Elle pleure comme une Madeleine!*' I was unmoved. '*Elle va se jeter dans la Seine!*' I expressed strong approval of this course. '*Mais, Juan, cinq minutes seulement!*' entreated the Gitano in his accent of a Spanish cow. And so, rather than figure in a disgusting public scene I agreed to the five minutes, but I stipulated, '*C'est Madame qui va payer les verres.*' '*Entendu.*' He fetches in a 'Madame' much disordered but bent on making herself as agreeable as possible. The interview took the form of a reconciliation and ended by our making the usual appointment which, needless to say, I failed to keep . . . There were many such episodes in the story of this scabrous entanglement, but in spite of their absurdity the demonic personality of this woman aroused in me and my friends anything but amusement; on the contrary, the mere mention of her name came to be, by common consent, barred among us, such were the feelings it evoked of discomfort and apprehension. There was, indeed, something uncanny, as of a person possessed, in Frieda Strindberg. Her energy and resilience seemed hardly human. It was difficult to believe this plump little body could contain so

much dynamite, this over-wrought nervous system weather so many storms. Her amiability only excited repulsion; her generosity, ingratitude; her incomprehension, dismay; and there was sometimes the inevitable reaction of pity as for a wounded animal . . . At last, discouraged, out-manceuvred, beaten, she packed up and left for America. I received a letter written at sea in which I was absolved from all blame; in which the writer confessed herself at fault from the beginning; all accusations, all reproaches were withdrawn and, excessive as ever, I was even presented, quite unnecessarily, with a kind of halo. It was a noble epistle. I wish I had kept it. As a matter of fact, I have no reason to be proud of my part in this drama; I can only congratulate myself on having, at least, proved more refractory than the other Auguste.

PETER QUENNEL

LAURENCE STERNE

II

In another relation, too, the character of the *âme bien née*—the well-bred spirit, exquisitely attuned to all the finer shades of sentiment—was somewhat difficult to support as he advanced on middle-age. Two daughters had been born to the Sternes. The elder died in infancy: the second, like her sister, named Lydia (a sentimental name of the period, with romantic associations) grew up as an affectionate and interesting child. In common with many selfish men, Sterne was a devoted father. As a husband, nevertheless, he was by no means satisfactory. The excitement of passion and the charm of romantic companionship had very soon evaporated. Elizabeth Sterne proved a prickly and sharp-tongued woman, who displayed great energy in housekeeping, but very little skill, and spent much time at the business of butter-making, only to sell her butter at a worse price than any of her neighbours. Moreover, during middle life she showed definite signs of mental instability; and after a nervous breakdown (brought on, according to local gossip, by discovering her husband in the embraces of her maid) it was necessary to place her for a time under the care of a mental specialist. Sterne's behaviour at this crisis was

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kindly and attentive; he humoured her belief that she was the Queen of Bohemia and for her health's sake drove her out coursing in a 'single horse-chair;' but to live with her on everyday married terms was not so easy. A savage caricature, signed 'Pigrich F.,' gives us at once the measure of Sterne's half-humorous disillusionment and some indication of the wry, crabbed and cantankerous side of Mrs. Sterne's character.

More or less peaceably they agreed to take separate courses. Sterne had all the vitality and feverish love of life that sometimes go with a consumptive constitution; and he found many amusements both in York itself and the neighbouring countryside. For example, there were the frequent visits he paid to his Cambridge friend, John Hall-Stevenson, now settled at Skelton Castle, a few miles from the remote fishing-village of Saltburn-on-Sea. At this distance, the squire of Skelton, dilettante author of *Crazy Tales*, *Macaroni Fables*, *Fables for Grown Gentlemen*, *Pastoral Puke*, and *Monkish Epitaphs*, cuts a sympathetic, if somewhat dim and puzzling, figure. Good-looking, idle, wealthy, aimless, he was the owner of a fine classical library, a diligent amateur of erotic prose and verse, and the possessor of a certain small original literary gift, which he expended in vague rhyming on facetious and satiric themes. His house had been re-named 'Crazy Castle' by the master and his intimates; a view of the building forms the frontispiece to *Crazy Tales*, (which open with an *Apology* and *Dedication*, from the author to himself, as being the person whose judgement he most respected); and the volume contains some oddly persuasive doggerel stanzas, describing the epicurean seclusion in which he lived and scribbled. Hall-Stevenson, it is said, had once had plans for re-building; but a friend, thought to have been Sterne, persuaded him to give them up; nothing must rob 'Crazy Castle' of its air of romantic decrepitude. Through the engraved frame of the landscape-frontispiece, we look past an Athenian owl, perched on a garden-urn, down to a large, ancient, here and there half-ruined mansion, which squats beneath the encircling hills in the embrace of a stagnant moat:

From whence, by steps with moss o'ergrown,
You mount upon a terrace high,
Where stands that heavy pile of stone,
Irregular and all awry. . . .

Over the Castle hangs a tow'r,
Threat'ning destruction every hour,
Where owls, and bats, and the jackdaw,
Their Vespers and their Sabbath keep,
All night scream horribly, and caw
And snore all day, in horrid sleep.

Oft at the quarrels and the noise
Of scolding maids or idle boys,
Myriads of rooks rise up and fly,
Like legions of damn'd souls,
As black as coals,
That foul and darken all the sky.

Such were the surroundings in which Hall-Stevenson, inspired, as he liked to suppose, by a philosophic conviction of the shadowiness and inconsequence of human life, and the vanity and vulgarity of human aspirations, wrote his drolatic verse-tales, peered apprehensively from his bedroom window at the movements of the weather-cock—for he was the most superstitious of valetudinarians, invariably retiring to bed at the approach of the east wind—or entertained a convivial company of Yorkshire squires and clerics. On his travels he had made the acquaintance of Wilkes and Dashwood; and the Monks of Medmenham Abbey were paralleled by the Demoniacs of Skelton Castle, a society which, although its ceremonial was less elaborate and its rites, apparently, far less obscene, belonged to the same queer family of eighteenth-century clubs, founded for purposes of drinking and loose talking, with now and then rather half-hearted suggestion of black magic and diabolism. Similar clubs—*The Sublime Beefsteaks*, *The Beggar's Benison*, *The Wig Club*—existed up and down the country, and in Edinburgh and Dublin. The ritual they followed was usually blasphemous and priapic; many of the objects that appeared on their tables were designed to appal the squeamish; while conversation across the dinner table maintained a high, if possibly rather monotonous, level of bawdy and bravado. Little has come down to us of the Demoniac meetings. We know that each votary had a ritual nick-name, Sterne being 'The Blackbird' in reference to his parsonic clothes; that Hall-Stevenson's cellar provided abundant burgundy; and that during the daytime the

Demoniacs shot, fished, engaged in disputation or raced their chaises wildly along Saltburn sands, one wheel splashing and scudding through the waters of the North Sea. Sterne's indebtedness to Hall-Stevenson is fairly obvious—and not only to the stimulating, slightly demoralizing influence of his friend's society and the conversation that raged at Demoniac dinners, but to the wide and eclectic range of literature he had gathered on his book-shelves. Here, in vellum-bound duodecimos or massive calf-clad folios, were those rare works of eccentric erudition or unorthodox speculation in which Sterne most delighted, from the more fantastic fathers of the early church to sixteenth-century French divines who tempered the parade of school-man learning with flights of licentious fancy. They encouraged the natural twist of his mind, and stocked his memory with a vast, variegated accumulation he could draw upon at leisure.

Meanwhile, Sterne's course was entering its middle term. So far he had little to show for the distance he had travelled; the career he followed in the Church had brought him modest rewards; the ardours of youth had melted away in an exceedingly humdrum marriage; he was the author of some anonymous pamphlets, written for his uncle, and of two sermons under his own name, printed at sixpence each. During odd moments he played the fiddle and drew and painted. But the evolution of genius is as unaccountable as its nature is mysterious; and, some time between his fortieth and forty-fifth birthdays, there occurred in Sterne a sudden precipitation of creative energy. Hitherto his attempts to write had been casual and undirected—a poem on the passage of the soul, published in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, and a meditation on the plurality of worlds in which he imagined the ripe plums in one of his orchard trees to constitute a whole stellar universe, and the bloom that clouded its planets to be their human or vegetable life. The discovery that of his writing he might make something more than a diversion, was very largely accidental. Among Sterne's friends was the Dean of York, Dr. Fountayne, an amiable and easy-going ecclesiastic who, some years earlier had become embroiled in a long and acrimonious dispute with Dr. Topham, the ecclesiastical lawyer of the diocese, a man with an insatiable greed for diocesan perquisites, over various small posts (including the commissaryship of the Peculiar Court of Pickering and Pocklington, eventually

snapped up by Sterne himself) of which Dr. Topham claimed that the Dean had thwarted him. Involved in this drama, originally on the side of Dr. Topham, subsequently on that of the Dean and his supporters, was the invalid Archbishop. Topham was at length defeated; the detailed narrative of his intrigues and how they were confounded is both tortuous and uninteresting; we have a general impression of proud pursy faces, flushed a deep crimson against snowy wigs and bands, of lifted forefingers marking the periods of endless argument, of voices now raised in sonorous indignation, now sunk in an insinuating parsonic murmur. Having failed to gain his ends by diplomacy, Dr. Topham resorted to strenuous pamphleteering. Fountayne replied; Topham again attacked; and Sterne, excited and amused by the resultant hubbub, dashed forward with an allegory to deal Topham his *coup de grace*. He was surprised and annoyed when the first flash of his weapon produced among the combatants a sudden apprehensive silence, and even his own party advised tremulously that he would do better to hold his hand.

The *Political Romance*, published in York in 1759, was almost immediately suppressed. Unfortunately, besides accounting for Dr. Topham, it was considered to deal disrespectfully with that mighty institution on which all the parties concerned were dependant for their livelihood. The Church itself would suffer from an allegory that portrayed the affairs of the archbishopric of York in the imagery of a backward country parish, where Trim (or Topham) figured as the sexton, dog-whipper, mole-catcher and clockwinder combined, who coveted the parson's cast-off breeches, lusted after the reversion of the great pulpit-cloth and old velvet cushion, and grasped at the opportunity of acquiring the Good Warm Watch-Coat that for two hundred years had hung behind the vestry-door. An admirable satire—in the very worst of taste! Sterne was persuaded to allow the cathedral dignitaries to buy up and burn all the copies on the book-stalls. Meanwhile, he had discovered the delights of unfettered self-expression; he had had a glimpse of his own powers and felt stir within his memory the accumulations of four decades—from the doings and saying of that 'little smart man,' his father, to the books he had read and the fantasies he had indulged in at Skelton Castle. It was with an extraordinary sense of freedom, an enormous gust for life, a dazzled, enchanted

apprehension of the amplitude and richness of the field he was surveying, that he sat down and embarked, then and there, on the writing of his second book.

Its composition proceeded at a remarkably rapid pace. There are some writers—certainly not many—who, as cats are reputed to do, give birth with satisfaction; and, though Sterne was a diligent artist and laboriously revised his work, his pleasure in writing usually preponderated over the pains and difficulties. Once he had begun, it was as if he were transcribing or remembering pages he had already written; and, indeed, there was little in the subject-matter of the book he had to fetch from outside, since it was the progress of his own mind and the history or legends of his own family he was recording upon paper. Thus Ensign Sterne, with no doubt many other hints and suggestions gathered from the past, lent substance both to the narrator's father, the good-hearted, choleric, cross-grained, retired Turkey-merchant, Mr. Walter Shandy, and to Uncle Toby, the retired soldier and fighter of mimic battles, who possessed that sweetness of temper and innocence of outlook for which the Ensign had been celebrated. Each of them is depicted with a minute fidelity that extends alike to their habits of thought and speech and to their smallest peculiarities of dress and movement. The minuteness of the author's descriptive method must be included among the strangest features of an often perplexing novel; and the suggestion was put forward not long ago that Sterne, mined by disease and haunted by the idea of death, was consequently obsessed by the idea of time, and that the extreme exactitude with which he records every gesture of his personages—every posture they assume, every shade of expression by which they betray their feelings—was a symptom of the preoccupation that never left him. His characters are, so to speak, all of them beating time: their movements denote the pulsation of hurrying seconds: at his back Sterne heard always the rush of the time-stream, carrying himself and his personages towards extinction, and made haste to pin down the impression made by one instant before it blurred into the next. The theory is ingenious but leaves out of account certain more obvious aspects of Sterne's development. In the first place, the novelist was also a painter and a draughtsman: his visual imagination was preternaturally acute: and it is clear that he *saw* every human being whom he described with a vivid,

almost hallucinatory distinctness. Few writers have been more fascinated by their own creations. The ordinary novelist sets to work with a rudimentary conception of how his characters should think and act, and a notion, equally rudimentary, of how they should appear. For Sterne, on the other hand, appearances were an essential expression of personality as the mind or soul itself: the inward and the outward were part of the same fabric: 'superficial' and 'fundamental' were merely relative terms, with little bearing on the problem of the human ego. Truth was revealed on the surface, as well as below the surface. And it is with the surface that Sterne begins, noting the changes of feeling and meaning that play across a face, the tragic or comic significance condensed in the precise disposition of hand, foot or knee. The quality of Mr. Shandy's despair when he learns that the man-midwife has disfigured his son's nose is conveyed by an exact description of the manner in which he falls face downwards upon his bed:

'The moment my father got up into his chamber, he threw himself prostrate across his bed in the wildest disorder imaginable, but at the same time in the most lamentable attitude of a man borne down with sorrows, that ever the eye of pity dropped a tear for.—The palm of his right hand, as he fell upon the bed, receiving his forehead, and covering the greatest part of both his eyes, gently sunk down with his head (his elbow giving way backwards) till his nose touched the quilt—his left arm hung insensibly over the side of the bed, his knuckles reclining upon the handle of the chamber-pot, which peeped out beyond the valance—his right leg (his left being drawn up towards his body) hung half over the side of the bed, the edge of it pressing upon his shin bone.—He felt it not. A fixed, inflexible sorrow took possession of every line of his face. He sighed once—heaved his breast often—but uttered not a word.'

Observe—such are the qualifications of parental grief—that Mr. Shandy does not tumble headlong, so much as let himself collapse, with a certain meditative gentleness, to the prostrate position in which he is surveyed by Uncle Toby. He is distraught, yet not so distraught as to wish to be positively uncomfortable. An examination of Sterne's manuscripts shows the pains he took, not only to improve the verbal rhythm of every period, but also

to increase the precision of every visual image. He worked always towards a greater sharpness of outline or a more vivid *chiaroscuro*, partly because (as I have already suggested) Sterne had been trained to draw before he learned to write: partly because his view of character and his method of characterization gave special emphasis to the outward evidence of inward happenings. The *psyche*, he insists, is no recluse, locked up out of sight in some inaccessible corner of the body; it appears continually, flows like an electric current through nerves and muscles, is manifest in the movements we make and even the clothes we wear. From an almost invisible centre (which vaguely we may apprehend but certainly cannot define) it throws out a constant vibration of changing impulses.

That these impulses are various and bewildering is a matter of common experience. Why then, says the novelist, try to portray human beings, or describe human life, in fixed or classical terms? Sterne is one of the first of literary impressionists; and, when he came to create and depict a family, he refused to resort to any of the commonplaces of official portraiture. *La vida es sueño*—existence is a dream; and Sterne, with little of the profound seriousness, at least in his attitude towards his own personality, that characterized Gibbon, and none of the exquisite moral scruples that tormented Boswell, let himself drift among the impressions and emotions, always vivid yet often dream-like in their inconsequence, that floated through his fancy. His plan, therefore, was to have no plan; his construction was to be circumscribed by no general outline, but should grow out of his temperament as the mood directed, and owe its unity less to symmetry of design than to harmony of atmosphere. When he wrote of literature, he was often accustomed to think in terms of music; and Chapter Twenty-Five of the original Volume Four, after a reference to 'that necessary equipoise and balance (whether good or bad) betwixt chapter and chapter, from whence the just proportions and harmony of the whole work results', includes a characteristic statement that, at least in this novelist's opinion, to 'write a book is for all the world like humming a song—be but in tune with yourself . . . 'tis no matter how high or how low you take it.'

Thus his novel was an astonishing combination of the precise and the disorderly. Into it he cast pell-mell the most incongruous

and startling elements—scraps of his family legend; a portrait of himself as the eccentric Parson Yorick and of Hall-Stevenson as Eugenius; a savage caricature of an old enemy, Dr. Burton, the learned antiquary and gynæcologist, portrayed as Dr. Slop; philosophical disquisitions, and Rabelaisian anecdotes of the kind he may have gathered at Skelton Castle, from the 'lounging books' and volumes of 'facetious tales' Hall-Stevenson collected. Reading Sterne, sooner or later we are bound to think of Joyce; and, though the parallel should not be laboured, it is worth examining; for both novelists were of Irish blood; both suffered from chronic ill-health and were deeply versed in music; both were avid readers, devoted to curious learning; and on each side there is the background of a shabby-genteel youth, dominated by an ineffective but impressive father. Sterne's passion for words, and the virtuosity he displayed in their management, were as conspicuous as those of Joyce . . . There the resemblance ends. No comparison can be made between Joyce's puritanism—surprising as were the shapes to which it sometimes fled for refuge—and Sterne's libertinism, tempered though it often was by intellectual delicacy. Joyce wrote at a snail's pace, building up his gigantic opus in stealthy solitude; Sterne composed in a transport of feverish excitement. And, notwithstanding a set-back said to have occurred when he read aloud part of the manuscript to his friends, the Crofts, at Stillington, and a number of his listeners fell quietly asleep, he had none of the hideous misgivings that usually impede the progress of the inexperienced artist. The book was a 'picture of himself', he said: it was the reflection of a temperament and history he could not and would not change.

Beside the delight of self-discovery, Sterne experienced during the latter part of 1759 another type of stimulus. He had fallen in love—certainly not for the first time since his marriage but, it would seem, far more seriously than on any earlier occasion. Catherine Fourmantelle had come to York with her mother, to sing at the Assembly Rooms. She was young, considered beautiful and thought to be well-conducted. Sterne was presented to her after one of her first appearances, and she was immediately involved in all the labyrinthine intricacies of a 'sentimental' courtship. He wrote to her again and again, in progressively passionate terms. She was his 'dear Kitty', his 'dear, dear Kitty'. He adored her to distraction, he said, and would adore her to

eternity. It was not long before he had proposed that, were God ever to 'open a door' by removing Mrs. Sterne (of whom, about this time, he had written to Hall-Stevenson in expressive dog-Latin that he was '*fatigatus et aegrotus . . . plus quam unquam*') Miss Catherine Fourmantelle should become his wife. Meanwhile he continued to press on her little gifts of honey and sweetmeats, sermons and Spanish wine. She found her way into the book he was writing, where her pseudonym occurs and recurs, with an indefinably musical ring, as 'my dear, dear Jenny', representative of all that was tender and feminine in the influences that governed his existence, who was neither wife nor mistress, neither friend nor child, but for whom his feelings had a bloom and glow that partook of many different characters.

Miss Fourmantelle, for her part, would seem to have been pleased and flattered. Sterne she described as 'a kind and generous friend'; and the friendship of a celebrity, to a young woman cast adrift on a strange town to earn her living, is always doubly grateful. During the last days of 1759 the booksellers of York were displaying in their windows a volume, published by the famous London firm of Dodsley and entitled *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, embellished with personal and local references and savage contemporary likenesses that every citizen could recognize. In two days the bookseller had sold two hundred copies. The novel was simultaneously on sale in London; but Sterne, though well pleased with the local renown he gained and with the eulogistic notices printed by various papers, remained for a time almost unaware of the *furore* he was causing. Catherine Fourmantelle continued to distract his heart; Mrs. Sterne's nervous malady was still an expensive nuisance; when, one March morning, he happened to encounter his friend Stephen Croft who was setting out for London, and Croft suggested casually that Sterne should join him in the expedition, he himself paying expenses so long as the adventure lasted. Sterne hesitated, agreed, darted off instantly to pack a best pair of breeches. A few days later, he had arrived in London and hurried round, before breakfast, to call on Dodsley. He learned that his book was enormously successful and that the public demanded more. Having rushed his London publisher into an advantageous contract, sold him a volume of collected sermons and promised that a new volume of *Tristram Shandy* should be written every year,

he returned 'skipping' with elation and poured out the story of the wealth he had acquired to Croft behind the breakfast-table.

Six hundred and thirty pounds was his immediate profit; and on this windfall he moved his lodgings from Chapel Street, Mayfair, to St. Alban's Street, Pall Mall, where for three months he lived in a waking dream of literary and social triumph. The whole metropolis was electrified by the news of Yorick's arrival. Invitations came ten at a time, visitors by dozens; Ladies of the Bedchamber crowded up his staircase. Chesterfield received him kindly; old Lord Bathurst, the former friend of Pope and Swift, declared that *Tristram Shandy* had given him a new interest in existence; Bishop Warburton, somewhat apprehensive at the rumour that the next volume of the novel would contain a picture of himself, presented him with a purse of guineas and an armful of classic literature, selected, the Bishop explained, to help him 'improve his style'; David Garrick paid him handsome compliments; and Lord Ossory commissioned Reynolds to paint his portrait. Sterne appeared for his first sitting, on March 20th, already somewhat shaken. He had been in London less than three weeks; but the strain of incessant dinner-parties, to which favoured guests were usually bidden a fortnight in advance, though he did not cease to enjoy his success, had grown more and more exhausting; and, rather than sit upright, he sank sideways against a heap of cushions, one hand supporting his head, a finger rumpling his eyebrow and pushing his wig askew. But the expression is sharp and amused; and the folds of the new silk gown—replacing the rusty cassock he had worn at Sutton—are ample and magnificent. He may have been tired: he was by no means satiated. He had no false modesty in describing to Miss Fourmantelle how amply he had triumphed or in reeling off the great names of his new acquaintances, who made of 'Shandeism' a cult and of Yorick its high-priest. A dream, perhaps—but an absorbing dream. Certainly he meant to dream to the full now that the occasion offered. And during April he wrote to dear Kitty in York, suggesting she should join him.

She came at his summons, and installed herself in Soho. But between Soho and Pall Mall the distance is considerable; and Sterne, caught up in engagements, now supping with the Duke of York (the royal personage who laughed at Boswell, and was later to accept from Captain Gibbon a copy of his thesis), now

being lionized at Ranelagh and Vauxhall, where even the waiters whispered and pointed him out as he strolled arm-in-arm with fashionable companions down the long lamp-hung avenues, now being carried off to Windsor to watch the solemn investiture of new-fledged Garter-Knights and whirled home again to fresh pageants and balls and supper-parties, found it difficult to be as attentive as a few weeks earlier, when Yorick himself or a servant bearing his gifts were seldom off her doorstep. Whether she was still, or at any time had been, Sterne's mistress, it is now impossible to say. His objective in such relationships remains mysterious. Was the feeling he had entertained no more (as he presently told the world) than 'that tender and delicious sentiment which ever mixes in friendship, where there is a difference of sex?' Were his emotions with regard to women in general (as was afterwards claimed by a French observer) so intense and yet so diffused that they were incapable of being concentrated on any single object? Whatever the solution of this and other problems, Miss Fourmantelle gradually recedes from his biography and then completely vanishes. He obtained for her an appointment to sing at Ranelagh. In a final note he laments that, although he has not had sight of her since Sunday, till Friday at two o'clock, he cannot promise he will call: 'Every minute of his day and to-morrow is pre-engaged, and I am as much a Prisoner as if I was in Jayl—I beg, dear girl, you will believe I do not spend an hour where I wish—for I wish to be with you always . . . ' But there his protestations are cut short. The musical echo of Jenny's name continued to haunt his prose; but the echo is faint and the tone elusive. Left alone nearly a week in Meard Court, Soho, her pride may well have revolted at such an unfruitful servitude and in the quarrel that ensued she may have angrily shaken free. Their desires can scarcely have coincided; through the mazes of self-interest they gradually wandered apart.

On Sterne, the effects of this breach (if a breach, indeed, occurred) were entirely imperceptible. Except for the fatigue he suffered, every circumstance combined to raise his spirits to the very highest pitch; and, while London notabilities were still scrambling to do him homage, he heard that he had been nominated to the living of Coxwold, a post more remunerative and better-found than that of Sutton-in-the-Forest. There was nothing more he could wish, he declared. Rich—at least in his

own estimation—recognized and flattered by those great personages to whose applause no artist, even the most intransigent, is ever quite insensible, respected and acclaimed by fellow-artists as authoritative as Garrick, Hogarth, Reynolds, he prepared after three months for a triumphal return to York. A public conveyance had brought him to London at Stephen Croft's expense; it was in his own carriage that, towards the end of May 1760, the writer travelled north again. Aglow with splendour and consequence, he rejoined his wife and daughter, whom he presently transferred to his new parsonage at Coxwold, an old and rambling house, full of irregular, comfortable rooms, situated on the edge of the moors in a much healthier neighbourhood than the marshy lands of Sutton. Besides, the house itself pleased him, one of those massive agglomerations of ancient stonework that seem to grow out of the soil in which they are solidly rooted; and, having renamed it Shandy Hall or Shandy Castle, he at once set to work on the third volume that would take him back to London.

For two years London and Coxwold divided his time and energy. Neither fame nor the back-wash of fame—the surge of Grub Street pamphlets and quickly run-up volumes, written in imitation or criticism of *Tristram Shandy's* manner that already, before he left London, came tumbling from the printing-presses—had yet dulled his imaginative enthusiasm or damped his creative fire. A fire it was, raging at all times of day, sometimes descending on him when he had hurried out and was half way through the village, so that he wheeled round and ran homeward before his excitement died, often blazing uninterruptedly from morning until nightfall. Great confusion surrounded him in the small ground-floor room he had selected as his study. Gouts of ink starred his manuscript, spattered on to the table and floor, and smeared his clothes and fingers. Seated in dressing-gown and slippers, he wrote without cessation; and in November 1760, two further volumes were completed. Late in the year, he went up to revise and correct his proofs. Once again, he was exceedingly well received; but the new volumes, when they appeared, were voted somewhat less amusing than the old, and the attentions of critics and pamphleteers were even more exasperating. Undismayed, he pocketed his guineas and, as soon as he was re-instated at Coxwold, fell back into his story. Between June and November, he composed a fresh instalment and for the third time took

the road south—but in a state that showed the physical effect of the toil he had undergone.

Much has been written—with as yet little result—of the pathology of genius. To what extent can we attribute the activities of the brain to the diseases of the body? Are there certain morbid conditions—the disease from which Sterne suffered being evidently one, syphilis in its suppressed stages perhaps another—which intensify and accelerate the growth of a creative gift? The tendency to snatch at life, to sweep together greedily, and even ruthlessly, all the sensations and impressions daily existence offers, is said to be characteristic of the consumptive temperament; and such a tendency is reflected in the construction of Sterne's prose. At its most eloquent—and Sterne's eloquence at its best has the supreme virtue of absolute simplicity—the impression it produces is often oddly breathless. The system of punctuation he adopted is individual and, here and there (it may strike a reader) highly disconcerting. Each dash—and there are often as many as twenty dashes to the page—seems to represent a gasp or hurrying heart-beat; and, though the minute delicacy of Sterne's observation need not be attributed to his anxiety to run ahead of time, his method of delivery has an air of feverish haste which, combined with the extravagance of the author's improvisations, is dazzling but bewildering. By the winter of 1761 the pace at which Sterne wrote, and the expense of vitality writing entailed, had begun to tell upon his organism. It may be that he felt a little less sure of himself than during previous visits. The lampoons and the piracies had increased in number: the sales of the last instalment had been slightly disappointing: Sterne's behaviour in society was rather more unguarded. And Johnson, who met him at the house of Sir Joshua Reynolds and gravely took him to task for his abuse of the English language, when Sterne extracted pornographic drawing from his pocket and showed it to the company, was obliged to lumber out of the room in elephantine disapproval.

He had reached London in indifferent health. A severe hæmorrhage suddenly reminded him of his experience at Cambridge. Death, a long-legged spectre, appeared abruptly at his elbow. He gave himself up for lost yet resolved to flee. A state of war, however, still existed between France and England; but English ministers were determined that a man of talent should not die for

want of their exertions; it seemed improbable that our humane enemies would refuse to lend their aid; and, though he could not procure a passport, Sterne was provided by Pitt with letters to various members of the French government. Desperately yet light-heartedly, leaving behind him a provisional testament 'in case I should die abroad' and a letter to his wife in which he assured her they would never meet again, Laurence Sterne during mid-January 1762 set sail across the Channel.

CORRESPONDENCE

Answers to Some Inquiries

Dear Sir,

In your letter of ... October you asked me the idiotic question whether the events described in 'The Mixed Transport'—viz., the massacre of Jews—are 'based on fact' or 'artistic fiction'.

Had I published a chapter on Proust and mentioned his homosexuality, you would never have dared to ask whether my information was based on fact, because you consider it your duty 'to know'; in spite of the fact that the evidence for this particular knowledge is much less accessible than that of the massacre of three million humans. You would blush if you were found out not to have heard the name of any second-rate contemporary writer, painter or composer; you would blush if found out to have ascribed a play by Sophocles to Euripides; but you don't blush and you have the brazenness to ask whether it is true that you are the contemporary of the greatest massacre in recorded history.

If you tell me that you don't read newspapers, white-books, documentary pamphlets obtainable at W. H. Smith bookstalls—why on earth do you read *HORIZON* and call yourself a member of the intelligentsia? I can't even say that I am sorry to be rude. There is no excuse for you—for it is your duty to know and to be haunted by your knowledge. As long as you don't feel, against reason and independently of reason, ashamed to be alive while others are put to death and guilty, sick, humiliated, because you were spared, you will remain what you are: an accomplice by omission.

Yours truly,

A. K.

To the Editor,
Sir,

London, 31 October 1943

You give space to a strange communication whose chagrined blustering appears aimed at me. I trust you will therefore allow me a reply to this ill-considered libel, the thoughtless vituperation of which reveals little but the panic and the frustration of its signatories. Totally incapable of objective argument they are reduced to cheap sneers.

To this poverty of expression these gentlemen add the insinuation of an unswerving and high-minded loyalty to Breton and his friends. This is a calculated deception as a pair of these wretched signatories have already publicly compromised themselves with the moribund versification of that dismal renegade, Eluard, with whom, as long ago as 1939, Breton and the Surrealists found it impossible to continue any dealings. Needless to say, the shifty confusion thus manifested has not inspired in me a readiness to take seriously the assumption by these gentlemen of an *ex cathedra* infallibility.

For more than three years they have skulked in silence, sitting as a deadweight upon a movement that is alive and has demanded a voice. Small wonder they should be understood as ceasing to consider Surrealism, ceasing to represent its thought. Small wonder that their present hysteria should be regarded as senility; and small wonder too, that younger and livelier men with reputations neither to make nor to lose should become the voice of Surrealism.

I do not claim to speak for André Breton and his comrades since I suppose them able to do so for themselves. I have kept them informed of my activities and of the position of Surrealism in this country. Should Breton, however, choose to accept, at this time, these others, it will only delay their inevitable demise and increase the violence of its happening; while I shall continue as I may, certain that, sooner or later, the web events have spun between Surrealism and my life will become visible with the pearls of a refreshing dew.

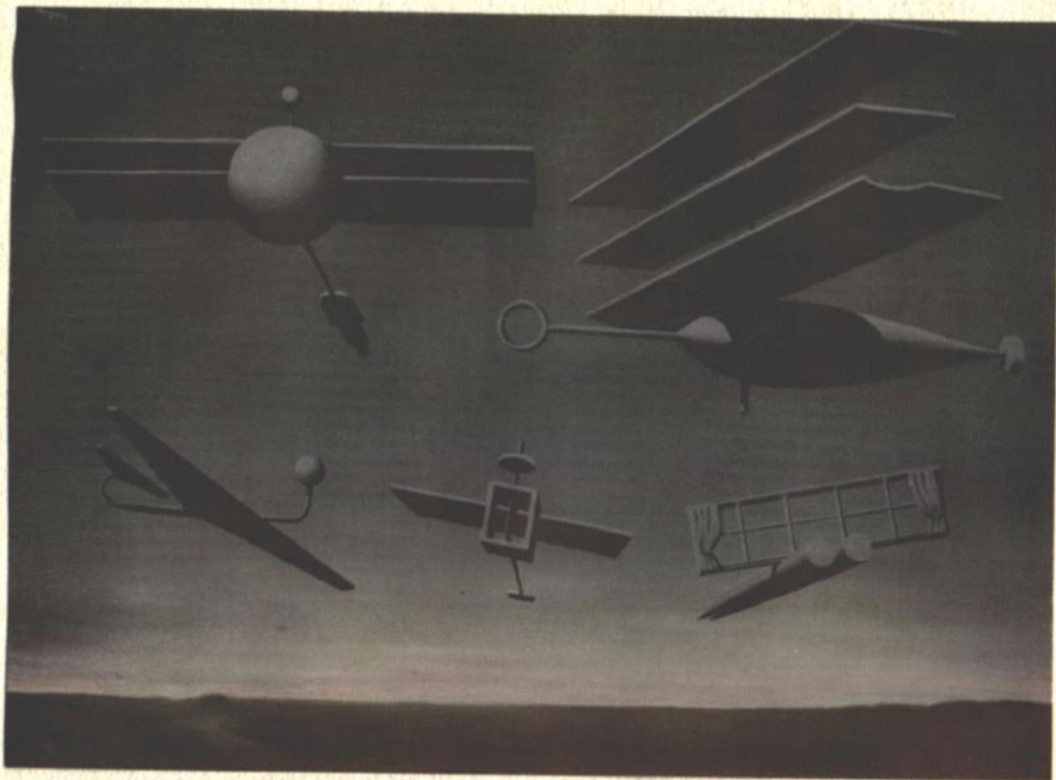
I beg therefore, Mr. Editor, to remain always the object of hate to such as these correspondents of yours.

TONI DEL RENZIO

Dear Sir,

In the interests of lucidity, could Mr. Comfort perhaps give short answers to a few questions? (1) Does he mean that the barbaric lunacy of a Nazi-ruled world is undoubtedly preferable to the barbaric lunacy of war (about which all civilized people agree)? Has he possibly been too much influenced in this view by his 'good friends', who are 'Jew-baiting and swastika-wagging maniacs', too little by their victims? (2) Or does he believe tyrannies never overthrown, peoples never liberated, by war? If so, how much history has he read? What of the Risorgimento? It is an ugly fact, but still a fact, that often only barbarism overthrows barbarism; one must choose the barbarism one detests least, or that looks like being the shorter. For many of us the choice is difficult; Mr. Comfort seems to opt for Hitler, with the simple and enviable firmness of youth. (3) 'Liberalism cannot survive in the mind of a man who acquiesced in war.' Does he believe no liberalism to survive in the mind of, say, Professor Gilbert Murray, or Mazzini, or Lincoln? (4) 'Men whose chief aim is to maim and subject the working class.' Does he mean chief, or only one of? And is the working class actually being more 'maimed and subjected' in this war than other classes? Conscription is classless. So is maiming.

ROSE MACAULAY



RENÉ MAGRITTE. The black flag. 1936

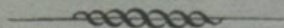
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THE seven stories here presented under the general title *THE DARKENING MERIDIAN* vary considerably in style and treatment. The book nevertheless has an underlying unity in that it symbolizes certain aspects of a coherent philosophic outlook. The opening piece, for example, though apparently a simple autobiographical tale, hardly more than an anecdote, yet projects a fundamental idea in this philosophy. As a result the emerging situation gradually acquires a deeper significance and sheds a curious illumination on the technical age and the triumph of the machine such as we know it today. The story entitled *CHAMOIS* sketches a portrait, shadowy and in outline, as seen from the wrong end of a telescope almost, of a characteristic figure of our world, the sceptical, reckless adventurer wholly absorbed in the tactics of violence, and indifferent alike to the purpose or ends for which it is applied. It is the story of a hunt; but who are the hunters and who is the quarry are questions that remain strangely confused. Sombrely, against a background of vast mountains, this subterranean struggle of factions and forces, that elsewhere in the centres of civilization agitates the surface of society, is played out to a dramatic climax.

The setting for *ON THE BEACH OF BONANZA*, on the other hand, is the world metropolis such as it existed until the outbreak of war. Here is the great city with its familiar contrasts of opulence and shabbiness, want and plenty, the demoralized ranks of the workless and the cunning ubiquitous middleman. It is a story partly realistic, partly satirical, and coloured throughout with fantastic overtones; and again it poses a metaphysical problem. The personal dilemma is the theme of the fourth story, and here a more elaborate symbolism is employed to describe the malaise of the psyche and the individual's efforts to escape from it. *ST. CUTHBERT* is pure legend, a dream of the Border country, enacted simultaneously in the dawn of our history and today. The concluding story, *ALONG THE COAST*, attempts a special kind of imaginative prose: the contemporary fable. Its style is deliberately formal, while the characters move through a magical landscape like cardboard silhouettes across a lighted screen. This is an allegory for the times.

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